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THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,245 SATURDAY 15 MARCH 1997 WEATHER: Mainly dry (IR65p) 60p

Trevor Phillips on the death of political loyalties

New column Page 21

Style spice: Do you really wannabe cool?

the long weekend

FREE Guinness A year's supply to be won in

The eye

Tories say the unthinkable

Anthony Bevins and Colin Brown

Tory attempts to create a united front for the election fell apart again yesterday when two former ministers, John Biffen and Edwina Currie, talked openly about the party's prospects after defeat in May.

While the party's most die-hard loyalists assembled for a pre-election Conservative Central Council meeting in Bath, Mrs Currie said that in the event of defeat, John Major should quit the leadership quickly. "Please, John, please, don't hang around. Don't make us wait," she said.

Mr Biffen said the scale of defeat might be so great that all the leading contenders could lose their seats.

The Prime Minister, who will today address the council with a trailblazing speech for the election, replied that those who were worth their salt were fighting for victory. With feeling, Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, told the council meeting: "If you don't have something to say that will help us win, don't say anything at all."

But, by then, he was too late to stop the two former ministers from the furthest wings of the party – the Euro-sceptic Mr Biffen and the Europhile Mrs Currie – breaking loose.

Speaking of the succession to Mr Major, something the activists in Bath steadfastly refused to do, Mr Biffen said: "It may be that the nature of the defeat is such that many of the obvious candidates for the succession themselves have been defeated."

The party, he said, might have to wait for leadership contenders to get back into the House of Commons through by-elections.

"There are many who feel John Major should remain the leader," he said, "not least to provide a decent period during which the party can consider the claims of the candidates and, as it were, let them use the catwalk to demonstrate their attractiveness and skills."

But Mrs Currie said it would be "disastrous" if Mr Major stayed on for long as Leader of the Opposition. "He would do it for the best of motives but ... we ought to have our leadership contest over, cleanly and quickly."

As Alan Clark, another former minister, pointed out, if the Conservatives do lose the May election, Mrs Currie would be one of the first to be out of a seat. He dismissed her remarks as a "final fling".

But the party will today want to devote its attention to the leader's speech at Bath, in which Mr Major will make his own "passionate and personal" claim for the centre ground of British politics.

Spinning the content of the speech last night, Conservative sources said Mr Major would speak as someone who had had to struggle against a background of personal adversity in housing, education, employment and neighbourhood, and that he would say that the next government would aim "to make sure that those who don't have, do have".

Mr Major appeared ready to suggest that he was putting himself above the short term fray for the election prize, with an agenda to build what he will call "a people's Britain" in which all the people – including the have-nots – can share.

That grand and idealistic picture was somewhat tarnished yesterday, however, by an excoriating and deeply personal attack on Tony Blair, the Labour leader, who was portrayed by Dr Mawhinney as an inexperienced, smarmy, grinning and hypocritical Socialist.

The party chairman said the Conservatives would be asking the people to choose between Mr Blair and Mr Major, "between smarm and substance, between grins and grit, between Socialism and success".

Mr Major was facing a growing rebellion from senior Conservative MPs who are taking up the offer from a millionaire businessman Paul Sykes, to give £500,000 to fund their election expenses if they will come out against a single European currency in defiance of the Prime Minister's preferred "wait and see" approach.

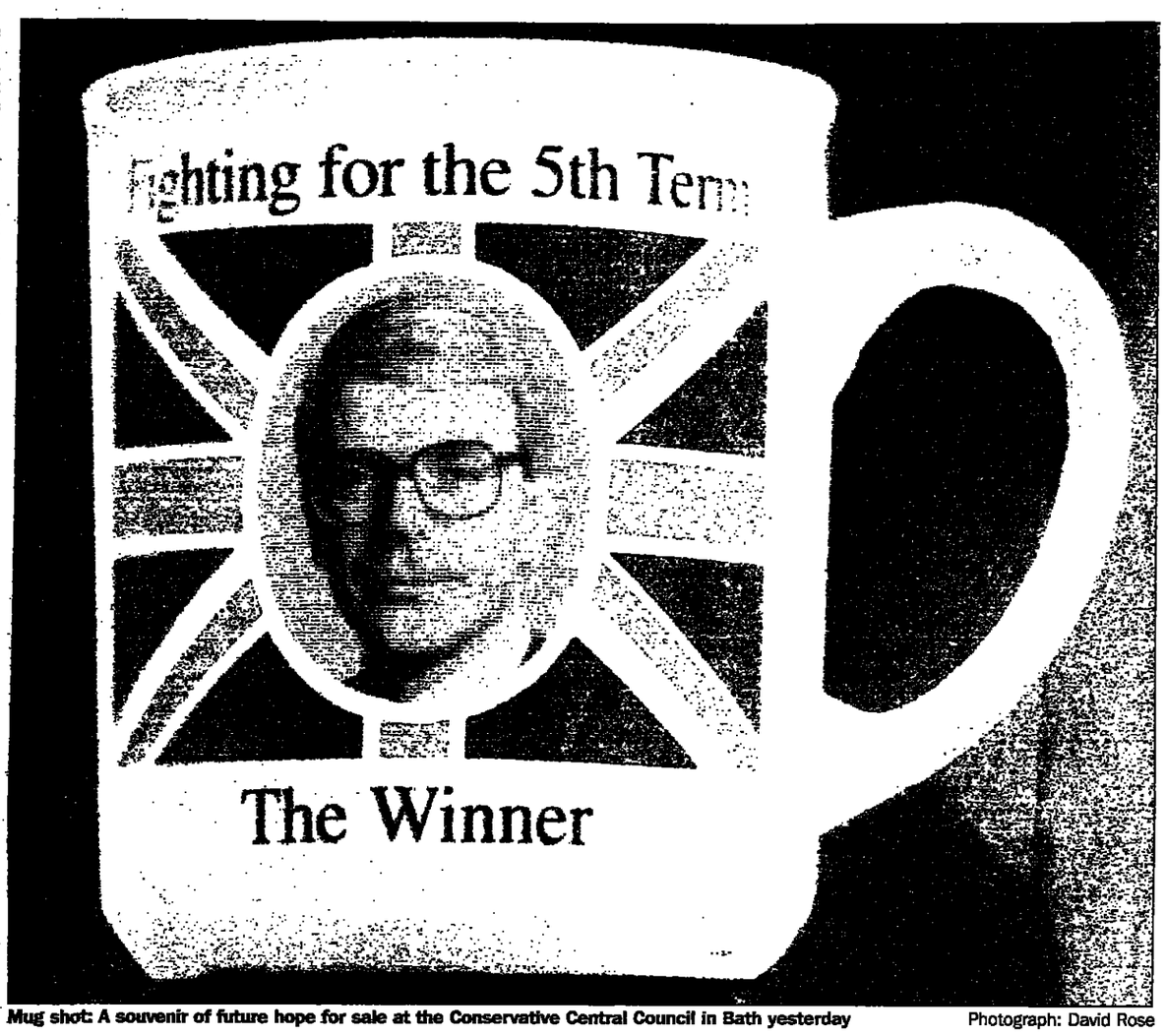
David Heathcoat-Amory, the former Treasury minister, yesterday joined senior Tory Euro-sceptics, John Redwood and Norman Lamont, who are expected to accept the offer.

Robin Cook, the shadow Foreign Secretary, accused senior Tory MPs of accepting "bribes" from the millionaire businessman.

Mr Cook challenged Mr Mawhinney to instruct all Conservative candidates to refuse the money.

"If he will not do so, it is the voters who will treat with contempt a Tory party whose candidates can be bribed to oppose the policies of their own leader."

Leading article, page 19



Mug shot: A souvenir of future hope for sale at the Conservative Central Council in Bath yesterday Photograph: David Rose

'If you don't have something to say that will help us to win, then don't say anything at all'
Brian Mawhinney, Tory chairman

'It may be that the nature of the defeat is such that many of the obvious candidates for the succession themselves have been defeated'
John Biffen MP

'Please, John, please, don't hang around. Don't make us wait'
Edwina Currie MP

Broadcasters put dialect on danger list

Ian Burrell

A national survey is to be carried out to document the rich regional diversity of language in Britain before thousands more words of local dialect are lost.

Linguists have identified the spread of "Occupational English", which is classless and devoid of regional accent and vocabulary, breaking down traditional speech patterns.

Researchers from the University of Sheffield have found that this new accent of the workplace is quite distinct and more downmarket from received pronunciation.

At the vanguard of the advance of Occupational English are local radio presenters, who shun the clipped tones of the BBC, but speak with a similar accent and vocabulary throughout the country.

At the same time, large parts of northern England and Scotland are now adopting the speech mannerisms of the south-east at the expense of their own regional accents.

John Wells, a professor of phonetics at University College London, said people in Manchester, Leeds and even Glasgow were speaking more like Londoners.

Glottal stops (as in "daw-er" for daughter and "war-er" for water) and the vocalisation of the L ("miwk" instead of milk) are increasingly common in Northern conversation.

Professor Wells, author of the book *Accents of English*, said: "You now get these features not just in the South-east but in other parts of the country. One exception is Liverpool, which has such a strong accent of its own."

Nationally there are more than 80 expressions for being left-handed, yet "cack-handed", a term borrowed from the South-east, is now the most commonly used in much of northern England.

In order that words are not lost forever, the University of Sheffield is about to undertake the first national survey of regional English for 40 years which will take a decade to complete.

The survey is being run by Dr Clive Upton and Professor John Widdowson, of the university's Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, who said many words were being lost.

Prof Widdowson said: "What we are seeing is a younger generation's version of standard English, which is much more of a halfway house."

As a pilot for the national survey, researchers are to compile a glossary of Yorkshire dialect, which will mark the 100th anniversary this year of the Yorkshire Dialect Society.

Readers will learn that to be "blethered after addling your brass" means that you are exhausted after working hard for your money.

"Callifudging" is an old Yorkshire expression for messing about and "manishment" has nothing to do with machismo but is a North Riding term for fertiliser.

A taste of regional vocabulary

Marrer	(workmate)	North East
Tab	(ear)	South Yorkshire
Sprack	(active child)	Severn estuary
Frit	(afraid)	East Midlands
Spelk	(splinter)	North East
Ochin	(hedgehog)	West Midlands
Backend	(autumn)	Northern England
Dap	(bounce)	South Wales
Lake	(to play)	Northern England
Whin	(Gorse)	Lake District

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QUICKLY

Nomura head resigns
The president of Nomura Securities resigned yesterday, a week after admitting his company made illegal payments to a gangster's family. Pages 14, 22

Threat to South West
Stagecoach, which runs South West Trains, faces a £1m fine and ultimately the loss of the £270m business unless it improves its cancellation-hit service. Pages 10

Jewish rift grows
The rift between the Orthodox and Reform Jewish communities in Britain deepened yesterday after it was disclosed that the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, had accused the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn, a Holocaust survivor, of being a destroyer of Judaism. Pages 12

Billie-Jo's foster father on murder charge

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

The foster father of Billie-Jo Jenkins, the 13-year-old girl found bludgeoned to death in her back garden, has been charged with the murder.

Sion Jenkins, 39, a deputy head teacher, has also been charged with dishonestly obtaining his job by lying about his qualifications and his teaching experience.

Billie-Jo was beaten over the head with a metal tent peg and was reported to have been found by one of her four stepsisters and Mr Jenkins at their home in Hastings, East Sussex, on 15 February.

The schoolgirl had been painting the patio doors.

Mr Jenkins was remanded in custody for a week at a special sitting of Hastings Magistrates court yesterday afternoon, 24 hours after being arrested for the second time.

The father of four spoke only to give his name and address during the 30-minute hearing. Smartly dressed in a blazer, blue-and-white checked shirt and fawn trousers, he remained impassive throughout the proceedings, occasionally bowing his head as two charges were read out in court.

Along with being charged with the murder of his foster daughter, he also faces a charge that between 10 December 1991 and 14 March 1997 he dishonestly obtained for himself employment by deception, namely by falsely representing his academic qualifications and teaching experience.

An application for bail was refused. Soon after the hearing Mr Jenkins was taken to Lewes prison.

He was due to take over as headmaster of the William Parker School, in Hastings, in September, and has been on compassionate leave since the murder.

Mr Jenkins and his wife Lois, 35, a social worker, have been living apart since his initial arrest on 24 February.

Billie Jo: Beaten to death

After the murder, Mr Jenkins and his wife made a public appeal for help to track down the killer. He told reporters that he had seen a stalker in the back garden and that Billie-Jo and his family had been worried about their safety.

He was arrested for the first time on 24 February and questioned for a day-and-a-half before being released on bail.

Mrs Jenkins returned to live at the house a few days ago after staying with relatives and this morning took her four children to school. Mr and Mrs Jenkins had fostered Billie-Jo for five years and last December became her legal guardians.

Mr Jenkins' solicitor, Brendan Salsbury, said his client "categorically denied" the murder charge.

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significant shorts

Lawyers demand Cheshire child sex abuse inquiry

Lawyers acting for 120 victims of child abuse in Cheshire yesterday called for a full public inquiry into Britain's biggest abuse scandal and into persistent allegations of a widespread organised paedophile ring that infiltrated childrens' homes in the Seventies and Eighties.

The lawyers also warned the Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, that they would sue him if he did not order a public inquiry into a the scandal that has so far seen 13 men jailed for 110 years, 111 people named as abusers and 534 former residents claiming they were abused while in children' homes in the area.

Peter Garsden, a solicitor co-ordinating the legal actions being taken by a number of firms on behalf of clients, said: "We have had 13 convictions as a result of a police inquiry which began three years ago and there should now be a public inquiry into the most serious paedophile investigation ever carried out in this country. I believe there was a paedophile ring in existence which was as disciplined as the Mafia." **Roger Dobson**

Jail for bouncer who headbutted MP

A bouncer who admitted head-butting an MP and breaking his nose was jailed for 12 months yesterday. Keiron Quinn, 30, had pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to assaulting Labour MP Ian McCartney and causing him actual bodily harm at Wigan Labour Club last November. Mr McCartney, 45, has campaigned for a national registration scheme for doormen and bouncers.

Sentencing Quinn, who is married with two children, Bolton Crown Court Judge Brian Carter said: "You are not being sentenced by us because it was a Member of Parliament you assaulted. It is our belief that the public would be outraged if you did not go to prison."

16th-century gun unearthed

Archaeologists have uncovered one of the largest early guns to be found in Britain. It measures seven-and-a-half feet in length, weighs more than a ton and dates from the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547).

It was found 20-30 yards from the river Hull at Kingston-upon-Hull on Monday, inside the foundation of a wall in the South Blockhouse, one of three brick fortresses built along the river on Henry VIII's instruction.

Zoe Evans strangled, inquest told

Murdered schoolgirl Zoe Evans was suffocated to death, an inquest was told yesterday.

The cause of death of the nine-year-old was revealed to the Wiltshire coroner, David Masters, sitting at Salisbury, where he formally opened and adjourned an inquest into her death. The coroner was told her body had been concealed in a badger set after her disappearance from her Pepper Place home at Warminster on January 11. It was revealed by animal activity on the steep side of the Battlesbury Hill, a bronze-age site, three quarters of a mile from her home in army married quarters.

The area had previously been searched by Army personnel and police with dogs trained to search and find bodies. The hillside body was formally identified as that of Zoe on Wednesday following extensive forensic tests. Mr Masters was told yesterday that DNA fingerprinting was the technique used in the identification process.

Rugby boss cleared of libel fraud

The chairman of Wigan Rugby League Football Club, Jack Robinson, 55, was cleared of a charge of attempting to pervert justice by a jury at Bolton Crown Court yesterday after a four-day trial. Mr Robinson was accused of trying to induce an executive of Leeds Rugby League club to supply him with letters purporting to show that a £150,000 player transfer deal had been cancelled following damaging reports in a local weekly newspaper, the *Wigan Observer*.

The letters were to be used in a legal action against the newspaper with the offer that any damages obtained would be shared by the two clubs, alleged Mr Alan Conrad for the prosecution. Mr Robinson, a wholesale antiques dealer of Pendlebury Lane, Haigh, Wigan, told the jury he had acted at the behest of Cowie's father-in-law, Jack Martin, who was a fellow director of the club. He said he was always confident Mr Davies would reject the proposal out of hand – which he did. He said he only agreed to put the proposal to Mr Davies in order to keep Mr Martin "sweet" and to ensure that Mr Martin would not withdraw a £250,000 loan to the Wigan club which was in financial difficulties at the time. **Peter Greenhalgh**

Jet-set conman must pay £3,000

A businessman who flew all over Europe on charter tickets which he had upgraded to club-class must repay more than £3,000 to British Airways, a judge ruled yesterday. Roger Roberts, 41, was also ordered to pay £4,000 court costs and do 100 hours' community service, after appearing for sentence at Isleworth Crown Court. But he was lucky not to go to prison, said the judge, Recorder Thomas Culver.

Roberts, of Hornchurch, Essex, had been found guilty at an earlier trial on seven specimen charges of using false instruments and seven of obtaining services by deception. He bought the cheapest fixed-date ticket, usually from Going Places, said Ms Parmjit Cheema, for the prosecution. "Then without any authority from the airline ... he falsified that ticket by putting on a re-validation sticker which made it look as if this very cheap economy world fare ticket was an open club class ticket which could be used at any time," she said.

Nursery vouchers scheme

Hammersmith and Fulham council did not take part in the pilots of the nursery vouchers scheme as was reported in Thursday's edition of *The Independent*.

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BACK ISSUES

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people

Pain threshold: An injured Mr Clinton is helped from Air Force One on arrival in Washington

The battle of wounded knee takes toll on golfing Clinton

It was to be a President's perfect Florida spring break: sunshine, some gentle fundraising, and lots and lots of golf. For Bill Clinton however, it ended in the agony of a torn knee tendon, a premature return home on a wheelchair and the prospect of a month or more on crutches.

The calamity occurred at 1.20 am yesterday, when Mr Clinton stumbled heavily as he was going down some steps on the West Palm Beach estate of Greg Norman, friend and golfing superstar, with whom he played a round during his recent official visit to Australia. The President "felt something go pop," according to his spokesman. He was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was given painkillers – "non-narcotic", aides quickly noted, mindful of the man who famously once smoked dope ... but did not inhale.

After being ferried back to a rainswept Washington on Air Force One mid-morning yesterday, a wincing Mr Clinton was laboriously helped into a black security service van for the short trip to the Naval Hospital in suburban Bethesda, where Presidents traditionally are treated. Surgery to re-attach the tendon to the right thigh bone was scheduled for the afternoon. The prognosis is of full recovery, but not before much inconvenience.

For the operation only local anaesthetic was planned, meaning Mr Clinton would remain conscious and would not have to temporarily transfer power to Vice President Al Gore, under the 25th amendment of the US Constitution. But he will be using a knee brace and crutches, doctors say, for four to six weeks, and his immediate work schedule is in much doubt.

For the moment at least, the summit with Boris Yeltsin next week is still on, as is Mr Gore's important trip to China later this month. "You bet," was Mr Clinton's reply when asked if he would still be going to Helsinki for what now bodes to be an invalids' reunion.

By the standards of recent presidential stays in Bethesda, Mr Clinton's is small beer – nothing to compare with Ronald Reagan's colon cancer or near assassination, or George Bush's heart fibrillation in 1991 that fleetingly raised the unnerving spectre of Dan Quayle in the Oval Office. Even so, this most golf-addicted of Presidents will not be swinging a club for a good while thereafter – be it in Finland, Florida or anywhere else. *Rupert Cornwell, Washington*

Morris goes from the ridiculous to the subliminal

Chris Morris, creator of Channel 4's satire *Brass Eye*, took another swipe at the media's concepts of truth and reality this week – this time by setting himself up.

It was almost certainly Morris (right) who leaked to the press the story of an obscene subliminal message about Channel 4 chief executive Michael Grade, contained in the last episode of the series .

The message, "Grade is a c***," was virtually undetectable without sophisticated equipment, and such is the uncertainty that the notorious hoaxer causes at Channel 4 that at first there was even some doubt whether the message had actually been broadcast.

The story of the subliminal message originally surfaced at the beginning of the week in an anonymous fax to a *Time Out* journalist who Morris – famous for never giving on-the-record interviews – had used as a conduit in the past. At the same time, Channel 4's Internet site received an E-mail telling the channel to look for the obscene message.

The story was then picked up by the *Sun*.

"It has been like this since day one," said the harassed Channel 4 press officer who had to deal with the show. "He weaves reality like a spell and turns everything into ironic media language. The series has finished now but he won't go away, he seems to lurk in the air."

Morris himself doesn't help, refusing to deny or confirm if he was responsible for the message, saying only "I deal in lies." The rationale for the message is supposed to be Morris' ire at Channel 4 pulling a sketch about Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe from the final episode. *Paul McCann*

12-year-old girl to win Oxford place

A 12-year-old girl is a step away from becoming one of Britain's youngest university students. Sufiah Yusof, from Weston Favell, Northampton, needs to pass one more test in order to begin a mathematics degree at Oxford University.

She is emulating Ruth Lawrence, who became Britain's youngest graduate when she gained a First in mathematics at Oxford in 1985.

And Sufiah could soon be joined by her sister Aisha, 14, and brothers Abbi, 15, and Iskander, 10. They are also well-advanced in mathematics and hope to win places at Oxford next year.

Sufiah has been offered at place at the all-female St Hilda's College providing she gets a grade A in a further mathematics A Level. She has now completed three parts of the examination and will sit the final paper in June. But she has already done so well that achieving a grade A should be a formality.

Sufiah achieved a grade A in mathematics last year. Her father Farooq, a research engineer, said the family was planning to move to Oxford to be near Sufiah. "Barring a disaster, she should get a grade A because she's done so well in

Thailand orders Khashoggi's arrest for fraud

Thailand yesterday issued an arrest warrant for the Saudi Arabian tycoon Adnan Khashoggi, marking a fresh legal tussle for the jet-setting financier who was once one of the world's richest men. Police said they had issued warrants for Khashoggi and four other officials of the Bangkok Bank of Commerce Plc (BBC) on charges of conspiring to defraud the bank.

An officer said the Bank of Thailand requested the warrants for the five on suspicion that they jointly conspired for Khashoggi, 61, to draw two billion baht ($77.5m) in loans from the BBC, without credible collateral, in 1995. The whereabouts of the globetrotting businessman are unknown. But his multi-million dollar deals, court cases and elite acquaintances have spread his fame throughout the world.

Khashoggi, whose wealth once totalled $4bn, amassed one of the largest personal fortunes in the world by playing middleman in the transfer of Western arms and technology to Arab oil states.

Much of it came from commissions paid in the 1970s by Western corporations that he guided in dealing with an Arab world flush with petro-dollars and anxious to modernise.

In 1986, Khashoggi played a key role in initiating contacts between Israel and US officials on the American government's then-secret scheme to sell arms to Iran.

Throughout his career, he has hobnobbed with the high and mighty, entertaining the former US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, the former head of Chrysler, Lee Iacocca, and King Juan Carlos of Spain on his private yacht. *Reuter, Dubai*

briefing

SOCIETY

Crime level nearly twice as high as official statistics

Crime is running at nearly twice the level suggested by official statistics, a survey claims today. Some 44 per cent of crime victims questioned for the survey – conducted by MORI for *Reader's Digest* – admitted that they had failed to report it to the police.

They did not do so because they did not think the police would do anything about it; had no confidence that the criminals would be caught; or because they felt the offences were too trivial.

The survey comes just days before the Home Office publishes the official figures for 1996, which are expected to show the fourth consecutive fall in the total number of offences recorded by police in England and Wales. But despite the falling figures and the tough law and order rhetoric emanating from politicians, almost nine out of 10 people told the survey that their concern about crime had actually increased in recent years.

In a separate study, the cost of car crime is said to have hit its highest level since 1993. The insured cost of theft of and from private cars in 1996 was £494m – up 14 per cent on 1995, said the Association of British Insurers.

DEFENCE

Global nuclear stockpile warning

More than 2,000 tonnes of weapons-grade plutonium and uranium are stockpiled in military stores around the world, often with lax controls at both national and international level, say the authors of a book published this week. The majority of this material is surplus to military requirements and cannot be used for other applications. In addition, new reprocessing plants in France and the UK are dramatically increasing the supply of plutonium which could be used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

The authors, all nuclear scientists working at a senior level, draw particular attention to the situation in Russia and the former Soviet Union, where controls on the materials are less than stringent. Since just a few kilogrammes of plutonium are needed to make a bomb, the threat of theft by agents of non-nuclear countries, or terrorists, must be taken seriously, they argue.

Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities and Policies. Albright, Berkhout and Walker, Oxford University Press

SCIENCE

Physics books will need rewriting

Cambridge scientists have achieved a major breakthrough which could mean school physics books have to be updated. A century after the electron was discovered, they have created a quantum measure of electrical current - creating another equation, I=eF, which physics pupils will have to learn.

The achievement is expected to lead to the first standard definition of the charge on a single electron. It also has far-reaching implications for ultra-low power energy sources and self-regulating "smart" computer chips.

The breakthrough was made by physicists in the same Cambridge University laboratory where the electron was discovered by J J Thomson, 100 years ago this month.

Professor Michael Pepper and his team used high frequency soundwaves to trap and drag individual electrons, one by one, through a device called a "split-gate" that concentrates electrons into a narrow stream. The electrons are carried along in the troughs of the wave, emerging at the same frequency.

The team is now trying for the first time to establish a precise standard definition of the charge of a single electron. The method is to measure the current using standard instruments and then divide it by the frequency. **Charles Arthur**

FOOD

Quest for a high-flying croissant

The UK's lightest, fluffiest, airport croissant can be found in the British Airways passenger lounge at Glasgow Airport. So says the restaurant critic Egon Ronay, in his third annual gastronomic guide to airports, published yesterday. Planet Hollywood, at Gatwick's South Terminal, meanwhile, is judged to have the best atmosphere, as well as the most welcoming and friendly service.

While Mr Ronay's "best chips" award unsurprisingly went to Harry Ramsden's (also at Glasgow), the chain's outlet in Heathrow's Terminal One was applauded for the "most appetising traditional breakfast".

The "most authentic cappuccino" award was jointly won by AMT Expresso at Heathrow's Terminal One and Café Select at Edinburgh. The "tastiest sandwich or baguette" is deemed to be offered by Pret a Manger at Heathrow, while the "best wine by the glass" is at the Noon Indian restaurant, also at Heathrow.

ARTS

Would-be MPs focused on film

A survey of General Election candidates' interest in the arts shows that 69.5 per cent choose film and video as their favoured artistic form, 69 per cent choose classical music, 66.5 per cent museums and heritage, and 65 per ent literature. Only 55 per cent named theatre. Less than 40 per cent were interested in pop music, and not even 10 per cent in contemporary dance.

The survey of more than 700 candidates by the National Campaign for the Arts, an independent pressure group, had a response rate of more than 40 per cent. Of these, more than half said they attended an arts event at least once a month.

Arts News, the journal of the National Campaign for the Arts, £2.50. Tel: 0171 828 4448 **David Lister**

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In the shadow of Satan

Voodoo and other pagan goings-on haunt a small country town that appears to be going to the devil...

Strange days: Revellers taking part in the Lewes torchlight bonfire procession, which is held every 5 November

Photographs: Andrew Hasson

Ian Burrell

For more than a year, the people of Lewes, the county town of East Sussex, have feared that they could be living in the shadow of the occult.

Cats had been sacrificed on church steps, a hedgehog with runic death symbols nailed to its body was posted through a letterbox. And a young environmental activist fell from a 300ft cliff after leaving a message saying: "Please God. Somebody save me. Protect me from black magic."

Some locals believed that the medieval town, which has ancient pagan traditions, might have become the home for a Satanist sect similar to that led by Aleister Crowley, who died in Sussex 50 years ago.

But detectives who have investigated the series of sinister rituals said that they had stopped after the arrest of a single schoolboy.

This week, at Lewes Magistrates' Court, the youth, who has now turned 17, denied pushing a dead hedgehog through the letterbox of a local woman.

The court heard that eight nails had been used to attach a runic note to the animal. The letters were translated as: "Hail Satan. By this rune beware all cursed. So be it." The prosecution was forced to drop the case when a key witness could not identify the defendant.

Next month the youth will be sentenced on four other charges of which he has been convicted, including the theft of a gravestone, possession of a knife, actual bodily harm and the disorderly behaviour of forcing a younger boy to his knees to recite the Lord's Prayer in a graveyard.

Police who visited the youth's home found he had converted the coal-shed of his mother's council house into a black magic shrine. The walls were painted black, and a star and runic circle were marked out on the floor. A cross was hung upside down in the sign of the devil.

At an earlier hearing at Lewes Youth Court, the boy admitted stealing a stone cross gravestone which was found in the shrine. Candlesticks, chalices and priests' robes were also retrieved.

The people of Lewes are more accustomed than most to pagan ceremony and strange goings on. Every November, 60,000 people converge on the medieval town to watch its ancient bonfire societies burn effigies on giant pyres. Unlike the bonfires, other recent rituals in Lewes will not be appearing in tourist guides.

> ❛ He is the spookiest person I have ever met in my life ❜

They started just before Christmas 1995 when a vicar found that figures on the children's crib had been smashed. A dead cat on the vestry steps had its throat slit and, two days later a beheaded cat was dumped in the same spot.

Soon after, at another nearby church, seven stone crosses were smashed and others turned upside down. Around one grave a shallow trench had been dug out and set on fire.

At about this time, Nick Gargani, a 26-year-old who was active in the local Green Party, struck up a friendship with the youth. The pair shared an interest in Tarot cards. One Sunday last April, Mr Gargani visited his girlfriend Luisa Serrechia in a state of distress. He was crying and told her that someone was trying to kill him.

He said he had received a voodoo doll through the post and a cow's heart hammered through with nails. Three days later, Mr Gargani went for a walk along the cliffs that overlook Lewes and plunged 300 feet to his death.

When police visited his flat they found pages from the Bible plastered across the walls along with the scrawled cry for help. At an inquest into Mr Gargani's death, the coroner, Veronica Hamilton-Deeley, recorded an open verdict.

She said: "I certainly can't ignore a cry for help and the evidence suggests that he got caught up in this stuff. I can't explain his death." Although police say there is no evidence to link the teenager directly to Mr Gargani's death, friends of the dead man say he had fallen under his influence. Johnny Dennis, who knew Mr Gargani well, said: "It sounds like Nick was sufficiently disturbed [to kill himself]. But only because of this very close contact with this particular character."

The youth was arrested in July, placed on a 7pm curfew and banned from visiting places of worship. An earlier court hearing heard that he forced a 13-year-old boy to drop to his knees and recite the Lord's Prayer after stopping him while he was skateboarding near St Michael's churchyard.

As the younger boy faltered in his recital, the older youth listened and cracked his knuckles. He said: "I presume you are not religious. That's a good thing. You don't want to get into any of that."

Court officials erected a barrier in front of the youth so that young witnesses could give evidence without having to confront him.

Police officers have felt chilled by his presence. One detective said: "He is probably the wierdest, spookiest person I have ever met in my life. He is very mature in a way that belies his age. I would seriously compare him to Damien in the *Omen* films.

"He scares people who are far, far older than he is. Mature, sensible, intelligent people are petrified of him."

Bad omen: Rev Anthony Hindley at a desecrated grave in St Michael's church

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

Five great sections for the very best in Sunday journalism

THE NEW LOOK OF LOVE

Reform school at 12, stripping at 14, druggy queen of the grunge scene in her twenties, and a celebrity widow by 30. Now Courtney Love is reinventing herself again – as a movie star. Marianne Macdonald witnesses a remarkable transformation

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IT IS. ARE YOU?

Scots penguins bring love in from the cold

Kim Sengupta

That hoary old myth that Scandinavians are red hot lovers has been firmly laid to rest. In fact, they now need help with their flagging libido from the allegedly dour Scots.

This, at least, is the case with penguins. Keepers from the Bergen Aquarium in Norway are visiting colleagues in Edinburgh to find out how they can re-awaken the romantic instincts of their birds, and reverse the serious lack of reproduction.

Edinburgh zoo will give their Norwegian guests a comprehensive assessment of what had gone wrong with the Gentu penguins' hormones, examining in detail every aspect of their lives from diet to nesting materials.

The 100 or so Gentus in the Scottish zoo have no such problems, leading healthy, well adjusted sex lives in nuclear families; and bringing up well behaved chicks.

David Field, a penguin keeper at Edinburgh zoo, explained that the birds are remarkably social and romantic creatures, with attitudes which would be considered ideal for the liberated 90s.

Pairs are loyal to each other, male penguins do not try to prove their machismo by playing around, and the "divorce" rate is extremely low. Partners tend to be changed only after one dies, and then after a period of mourning.

Males, said Mr Field, are the epitome of the modern man. "They play a full part in nest building, incubation and rearing the chicks. The pairs are also remarkably loyal to each other, and tend to stick to the same partner."

Love interest: Penguins at Edinburgh zoo lead healthy sex lives, unlike those in Norway Photograph: Colin McPherson

Nor are the pairings based purely on lust. The bondings start before the mating season begins and seem to grow stronger over time.

Just as in human relationships, presents mean a lot to a courting penguin. Mr Field explained: "As they prepare their nests, they start to form a very strong pair bond, through the presentation to each other of gifts, like stones, very special stones, which are round and flat, and brightly coloured, as well as small pieces of vegetation." And it is not just the male Gentus who come bearing gifts. The females are just as likely to present their own share of shiny stones and tasteful scrub. They do not seem to think they are being too forward, said Mr Field.

In Oslo, zoologist and author Olivia Sorensen said: "Obviously we are grateful for the help of the British experts. The Gentus are very nice creatures, and we want them to continue to reproduce in Bergen. As for the so-called sexual drive of Scandinavian humans, I always thought that was a strange Anglo-Saxon obsession."

Poisoned apples add to Maff's troubles

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

After BSE and *E.coli* in beef, now it is pesticides in good old British apples.

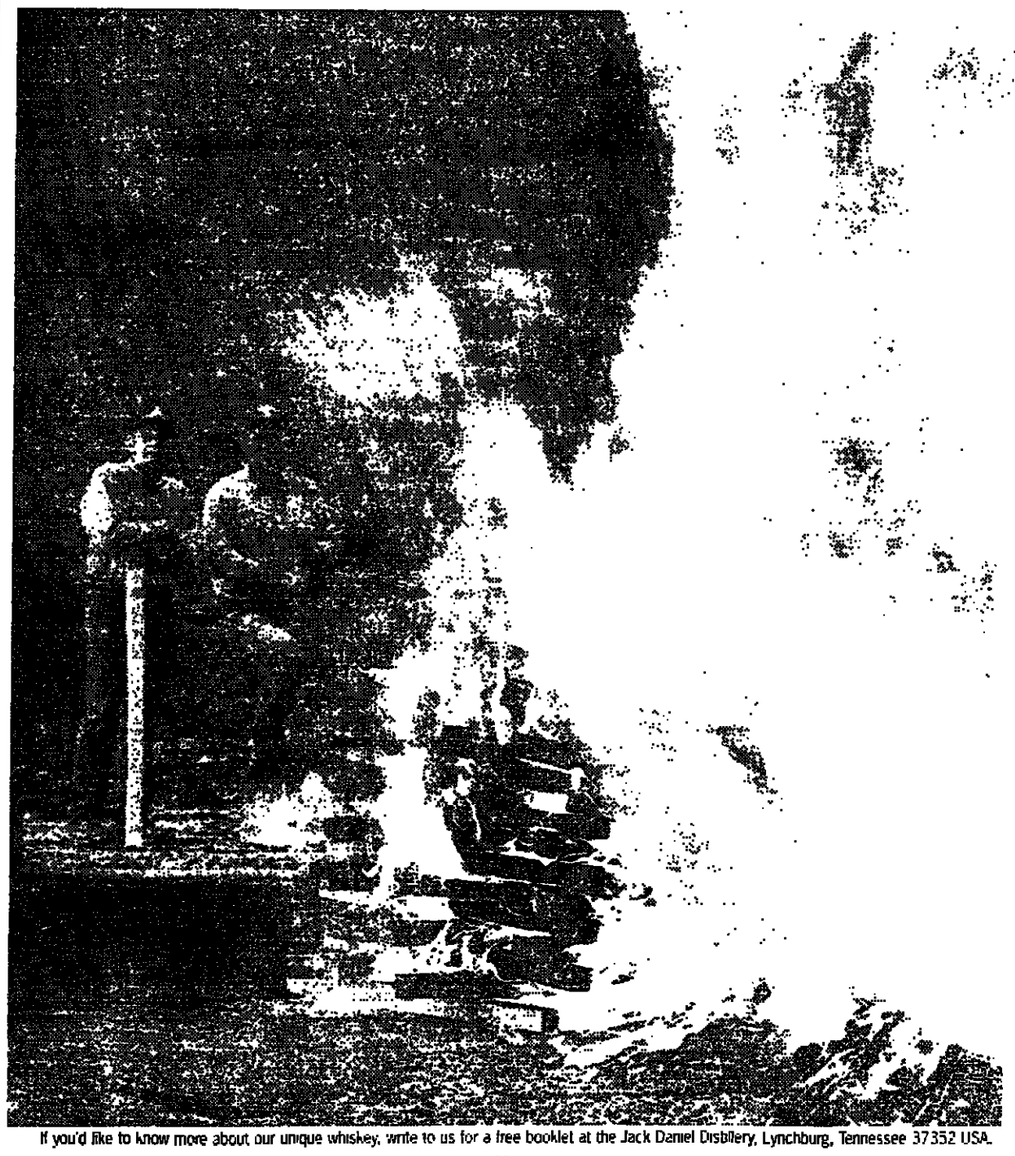
The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced the findings of a report showing that UK-produced apples have been found with high traces of pesticides.

Officials at Maff, dubbed the "Ministry of Incompetence", insisted that apples were safe to eat and the highest residues of pesticides found were still within internationally-accepted safety limits. One Maff source said: "It's not mad apple disease." But the officials added the rider that it was wise to wash fruit before eating.

Research showed that along with apples, the consumer's diet may include carbaryl, chlorpyrifos, paclobutrazol, triazophos; bananas may carry chlorpyrifos; and oranges may carry malathion, methidathion, and parathion methyl.

Professor Sir Colin Berry, chairman of the advisory committee on pesticides, said the chance of finding a high residue apple would be less than one in a thousand items of fruit.

The pesticides would have no effect on most people, said the officials. Toddlers and babies might get a reaction but only if they ate two of the "worst case" quarter-pound apples in one day, and they might suffer a bout of "griping stomach". They would be more likely to be sick from apples than the pesticide.



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Appeal on forced birth is refused

Kate Watson-Smyth

A pregnant woman who was detained under the Mental Health Act and forced to have a caesarean section was yesterday refused leave to seek a judicial review challenging the legality of the decision.

Mr Justice Popplewell said that Ms S, a 29-year-old veterinary nurse, had failed to launch the proceedings within the required three-month time limit and for that reason he was refusing her application.

Ms S, who cannot be named for legal reasons, wanted to bring the case in order to decide whether the 1983 Mental Health Act can be used to detain a pregnant woman against her will and force her to undergo invasive surgery for physical, rather than mental, disorder.

> The hospital applied for a detention order without giving her the chance to go to court

An appeal is likely and the Court of Appeal will have to decide whether the issues raised by Ms S outweigh the fact that her application for a judicial review came too late.

She launched the challenge against Louize Collins, the London Borough of Merton's social worker who formally applied for her to be detained in hospital under the Act, and the NHS Trusts running the hospitals where she was held and treated – St George's, Tooting and Springfield Hospital.

The courts were also being asked to decide whether, once a person was detained, hospital managers acted lawfully in denying her access to a court, "or even informing her that it is intended to apply for a declaration in the Family Division that the treatment to which she does not consent may be forced upon her".

Speaking after the hearing Ms S, who is now the mother of a 10-month girl, said that she was disappointed but would appeal against the decision.

The court heard that Ms S had a long-standing aversion to medical intervention, including injections and anaesthesia.

She had planned to go to Wales, where she had close friends, in order to give birth there, but when she was diagnosed with pre-eclampsia she was advised to have bed rest, said Richard Gordon QC.

"She explained to the doctor that she was feeling fit and well and wanted a home delivery. She also said that as a veterinary nurse she was aware of the risk of pre-eclampsia."

But the doctors were fearful for the safety of Ms S and her baby and on 26 April, when she was 36 weeks pregnant, they obtained a court order for her to be detained and the caesarean section was carried out.

She said she was "angry and upset at being forced to undergo invasive surgery".

Mr Gordon told the court that after the operation Ms S found it difficult to bond with the baby and has suffered from flashbacks and post traumatic stress disorder.

"The hospital applied for treatment without telling Ms S, or giving her the opportunity to go to court and put her side of the story. It cannot be right that a person should remain in ignorance of the application until it is too late to do anything about it," he said.

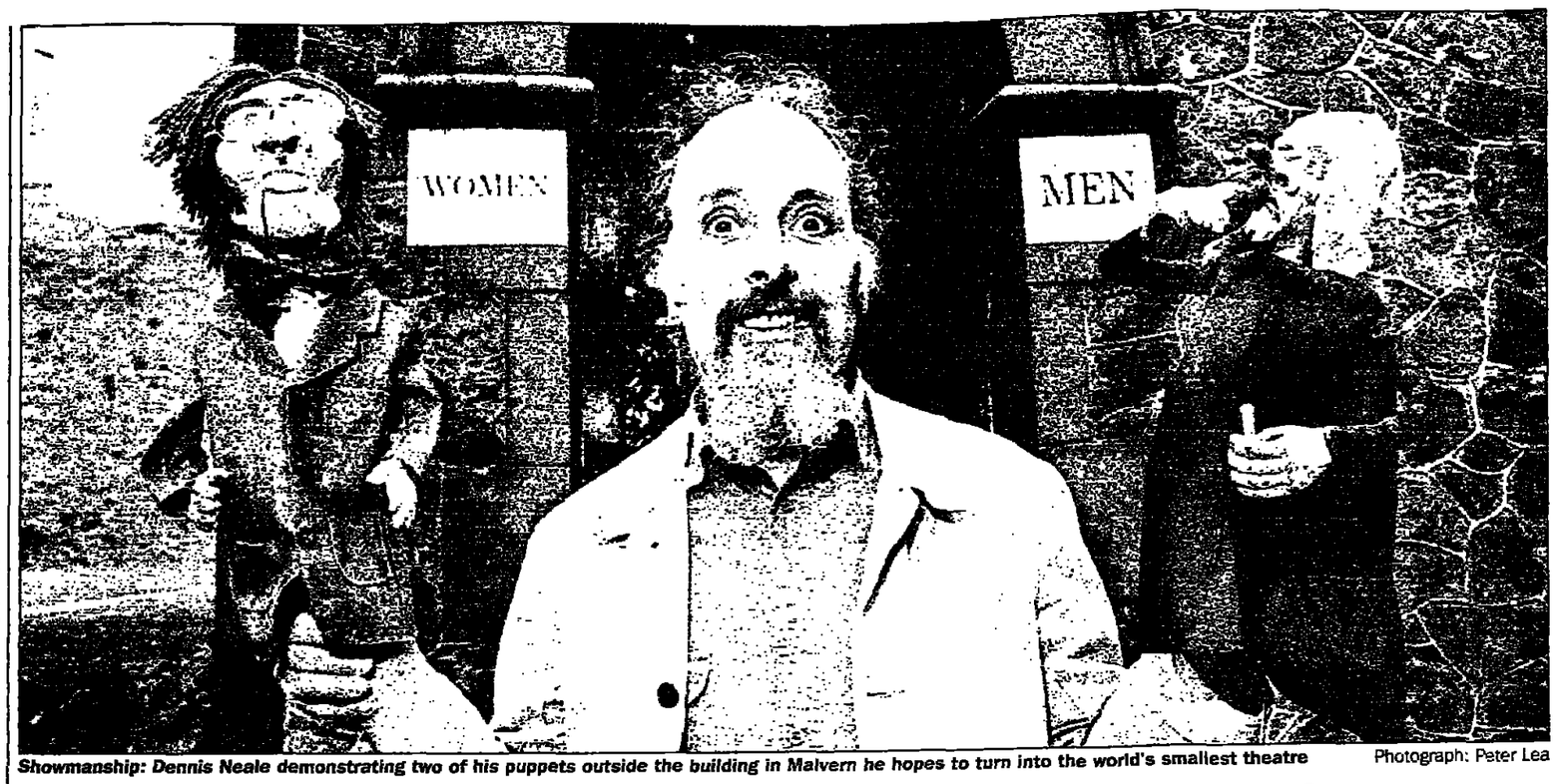
"This case enshrines a number of points involving fundamental human rights."

After the hearing, Barbara Hewson, representing Ms S, said: "This is a very important case for women generally and she has been turned away on a technicality."

She said that immediately after the birth, Ms S had rejected her baby and had considered having her fostered.

One of the reasons for the delay in bringing the application was the battle which she fought with the social services for custody of her daughter, after initially rejecting the baby.

Once she had made contact with a solicitor, there had been long delays in obtaining medical records and the application was not launched until 6 December, seven months after she had been released from hospital.



Showmanship: Dennis Neale demonstrating two of his puppets outside the building in Malvern he hopes to turn into the world's smallest theatre Photograph: Peter Lea

Loo becomes theatre of convenience

Richard Smith

The smallest theatre in the world is to open in an old Victorian lavatory. The former men's public convenience is just 16ft long and between 6 and 10ft feet wide.

The wedge-shaped building in Malvern, Hereford and Worcester, has a stone facade and many of the original white splashback tiles inside. But part-time social worker Dennis Neale, 49, believes it will be the perfect venue for one-man shows, poetry readings and puppet shows.

He plans to create a stage at one end measuring 6ft by 4ft, with seating on two levels for an audience of 15 people.

Mr Neale, an amateur puppeteer of Welland, near Malvern, has already christened the building the Theatre of Small Convenience. "Obviously the takings would be rather small so its not going to be a huge money-making venture," he said. "But its a magical building and will provide a wonderfully intimate atmosphere.

"The seating has got to be very clever. I have this idea to do tiered seating in a honeycomb shape to maximise the number of people we can fit inside. The seats could be shaped like old-fashioned urinals which would be an unusual and eccentric touch

"There will be no room for a bar and the ticket attendant will probably have to stand outside. Unfortunately there will be no changing rooms which might challenge some artists. They will probably have to change in the car or at a nearby hotel - we could always provide them with an umbrella if it was raining.

"But I think it would be a challenge for actors to perform in such a small theatre. They certainly wouldn't need a microphone."

The new theatre in Edith Walk, Malvern, Worcester, will be half the size of the building which currently lays claim to the title of the world's smallest theatre. The *1997 Guinness Book of Records* gives that honour to the Piccolo theatre in Hamburg, Germany, which was founded in 1970 and boasts an audience capacity of 30.

Mr Neale is hoping to rent the council-owned building for around £35 a week. It will be a contrast to the Malvern Festival Theatre which is undergoing a £6.8m facelift.

The spa town stages its own festival every summer in honour of composer Sir Edward Elgar who lived nearby in Lower Broadheath. But local wags are already suggesting the theatre should stage its own season of Shakespeare plays including Lav's Labours Lost, King John, Toilet and Cressida and The Two Gents Of Verona.

Mr Neale met Malvern town-centre manager Ms Jane Allen yesterday to discuss the project and is hoping the new theatre could open within three months.

"I think its an absolutely fantastic idea," Ms Allen said. "If theatregoers want something more intimate than the West End then Malvern will be the place."

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Industrial fishing draining the North Sea

Nations move to ban 'suction' catches and dumping of freshly caught, dead fish

Emma Bonino: 'There will be tough measures'

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent
Bergen

North Sea nations cracked down on industrial suction fishing yesterday, and moved a step closer towards banning the dumping of huge quantities of freshly caught, dead fish back into the heavily over-fished sea.

At the two-day meeting in Norway's second city, the eight nations – seven from the European Union plus Norway – called for fishing to be banned or restricted where it was doing local harm to the marine ecosystem. The move is intended to restrict industrial fishing which sucks up small fish and beam trawlers which drag heavy chains along the sea bed.

Denmark's Environment minister, Svend Auken, said that his country, the EU's biggest industrial fisher, would respect such bans. Roughly half the tonnage of fish caught in the North Sea consists of these small fish near the base of food chains, used to make oil and livestock feed. These catches are not controlled by quota but the North Sea states said they should be.

Fisheries and environment ministers countries also agreed on an urgent search for ways of minimising discards – the throwing back of netted but unwanted fish – "including the possibility of a ban".

Each year, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fish are dumped overboard from trawlers, a wasteful side effect of the EU's fish quotas. Germany said that for each kilogram of plaice brought to shore, 15kg of other fish and marine species were thrown back dead.

John Gummer, Britain's Secretary of State for the Environment, who has worked closely with environmental organisations, said that the declaration ministers had signed meant big changes in fishing.

"I want my children to be able to eat North Sea cod and I want there to be enough kept in he sea for fishermen's children to be able to make a living from fishing too," he said. "The ecological health of our seas is now the fundamental driver."

But Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said: "The overfishing continues and the ministerial declaration remains fundamentally flawed." Germany also said too little had been agreed.

Robert Allan, chief executive of the Scottish Fisherman's Federation, said the final declaration was a sensible, pragmatic solution. He was satisfied that it was a much weaker document than the first draft which opened the Bergen negotiations over a year ago.

But the EU's fisheries commissioner, Emma Bonino, warned: "There will be tough measures for the fishing communities and it will not be easy for their lives." The declaration said cuts in fishing fleets or other restraints on fishing beyond those agreed were necessary.

Implementing the ministerial declaration now depends entirely on the decisions of Norway and all 15 European Union member states which together rule North Sea fishing. There was much argument during the talks about how far the seven North Sea states could go in committing all 15 to action.

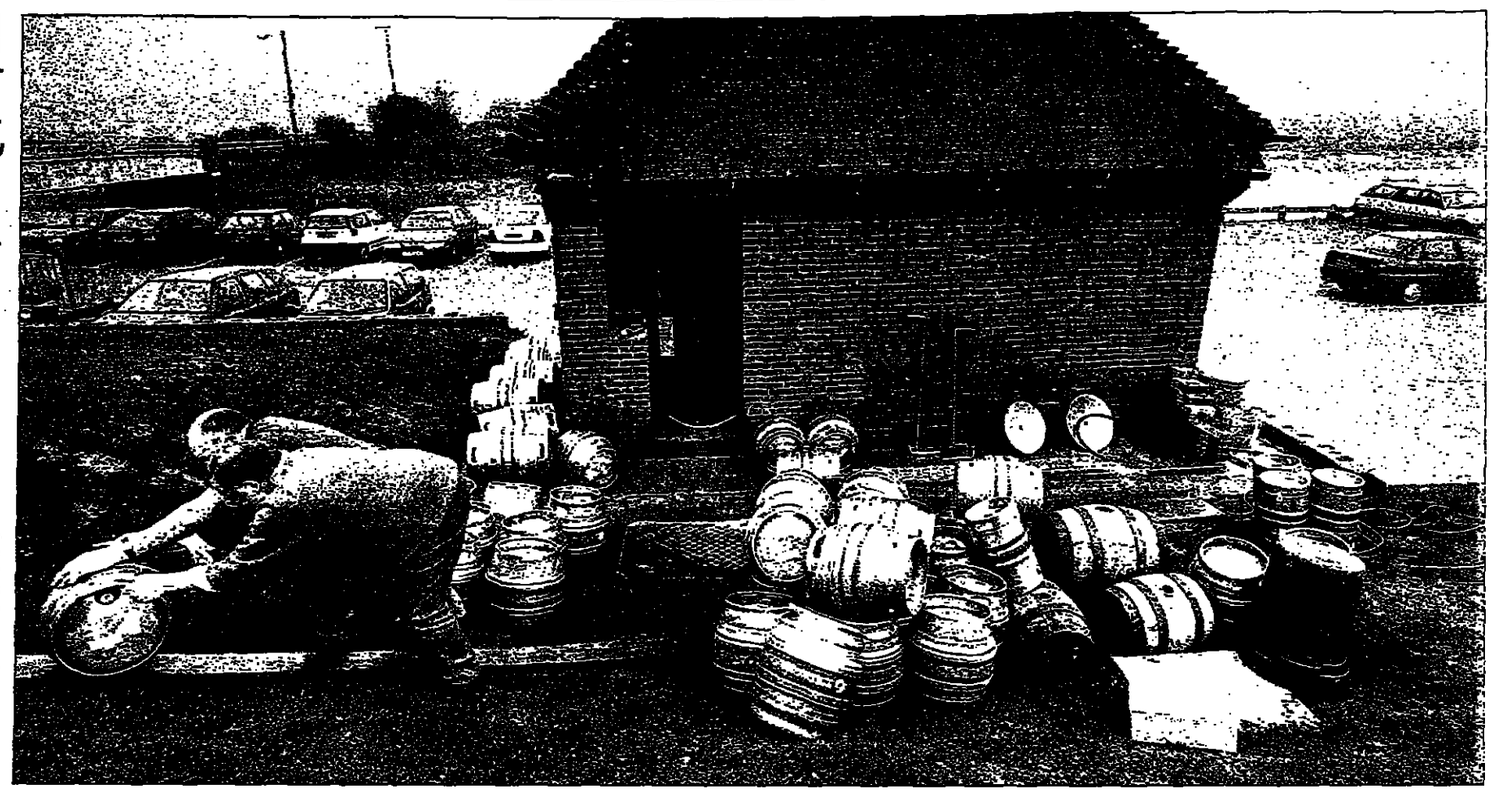
Mr Gummer promised that when Britain was president of the European Union in 1998 it would review how fast the Bergen declaration was being implemented. And Germany said it would do the same when it held the presidency the year after.

Smugglers roll out barrel against the excise men

A SMUGGLER'S SONG

'Five and twenty ponies
Trotting through the dark -
Brandy for the Parson,
'Baccy for the Clerk;
Laces for a lady, letters for a spy,
And watch the wall, my darling,
while the Gentlemen go by!'

Rudyard Kipling



True Gents: A regular at the *Golden Galleon* presents his membership card (left) as the latest batch of beer is carried from the brewery to be sold, duty-free, in the public bar Photographs: David Rose

Kate Watson-Smyth

When the mist rolls in off the sea you can almost hear the thudding hooves of the smugglers' horses as they race up the valley carrying their precious hauls of contraband away from the prying eyes of the excise militia.

Often the "Gentlemen" would take refuge in the old alehouse in this corner of East Sussex, known as Smugglers' Valley. Now, 200 years on, the countryside has hardly changed around the tiny hamlet of Exceat, near Newhaven. The alehouse is still there – and the fight against the militia men is still passionately fought.

A group of regulars at The Golden Galleon have formed a society with a common purpose. The beer is no longer smuggled on to the premises, merely carried up to the pub from the tiny brewery outside, but it is dispensed from behind the bar – and what's more, it's duty free.

The Gentlemen Entrepreneurs Nil Taxation Society (Gents) was formed in protest at what members see as the excessive duty levied on beer by Her Majesty's Government. In France, drinkers pay the equivalent of around 4p a pint, but in this corner of the European Union the taxman takes 25p.

The Gents are prepared to fight to the bitter end. Well, almost – a building society account is holding the duty for which they might be liable, just in case. But Alan Edgar, secretary of the club, is confident it will not come to that.

"We buy the raw ingredients, not the alcohol, and then it is dispensed in the bar using a system of chits. So, as we're not selling beer, we don't have to pay duty."

As far as the letter of the law is concerned he would appear to have a point, although Customs and Excise, who have been informed, are keeping a beady eye on the situation. It would seem that as the rules stand they can do nothing. But if too many people jump on the bandwagon it could be in their interest to test the case in court.

And while Mr Edgar remains sanguine, all around him in the packed lunchtime bar, Gents (both male and female) are waving their membership cards at the barman and drinking deep.

It costs £25 to join, and that entitles members to 25 pints. The money represents the cost of the raw ingredients, which they then own. This means they do not have to buy the beer for a second time once it has been brewed. Each time someone orders a pint, his card is clipped until he has finished his share. After a corkage charge and "rent" to the brewery, beer works out at 62p a pint.

Reg Vousden, whose family has lived in the Cuckmere Valley for generations and who is probably descended from the original "Gentlemen" who so inspired Kipling, said: "It's so stupid that the French pay so little duty and we pay so much. We were told when we went into Europe that things would be equalised – otherwise what is the point?"

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We've given up: Columnists articulate Tory despair

'Farewell you judicious conditionals. Ever since Wirral, the media have been talking in red-hot indicative mood'

Boris Johnson
'Daily Telegraph'

'Oh come on, let's just say it. The Tories are heading for defeat'

Matthew Parris
'Times'

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Matthew Parris, the former Tory MP, yesterday became the third Conservative commentator in 48 hours to write-off the Tories chances of winning the general election.

The consensus among the scribbling Tory classes is that the Tories are heading for defeat. But they are already writing about the succession for the Tory leadership. In a call for John Major after defeat to stay on as a caretaker leader for 12 months, Mr Parris said: "A presumption is growing that if the Tories lose then John Major goes – quickly. The presumption is unfounded, almost without precedent, and wrong. It should be rebutted now."

Boris Johnson, who is standing for the Tories in Clwyd South, was the first to admit the writing was on the wall after the Wirral by-election.

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* under the headline, Mr Johnson said: "It's no longer if. It's when ... It's Labour will this, and Labour will that, and never mind the formality of the election."

"Having decided that Peter Mandelson will get a cabinet job, the real cool cats of punditry are already discussing Mr Blair's second reshuffle.

"What an extraordinary position, when spring is here, and the weather so fine ... the Opposition appears predestined to win? And yet so they appear."

He produced 20 events which could stop Labour winning, including public revulsion to Robin Cook's predictions of a Labour landslide. The voters might decide to vote Tory to prevent such a landslide. "Incredible, I know. But you can't take the voters for granted."

Simon Heffer, an unrelenting right-wing critic of John Major, and columnist in the *Daily Mail*, said on the BBC radio *Today* programme it would be morally bad for the Tories to win a fifth term.

He said it had been immoral for the government to put up taxes and for Mr Major to keep Britain in the European exchange rate mechanism before it was forced out on "Black Wednesday".

"It cost, while it was in operation, a million jobs, 100,000 homes repossessed and businesses failing, and no one took any responsiblity for it. That was a great moral mistake in this Conservative Party's history," Mr Heffer said.

Mr Parris, writing in the *Times*, said: "Granted miracles can happen. Tony Blair might be eaten by a shark. The Archangel Gabriel might appear in Trafalgar Square on the eve of poll and command Britain to vote Conservative. Jack Straw might read his pager the wrong way up and pledge himself to the slaughter of the first-born. Though any vacuum as perfect as new Labour remains capable at all times of imploding, the vacuum chamber has been engineered well and replicated in steel. The chances of accident diminish as the clock ticks."

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Top judge attacks Howard's jury plan

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

A new battlefront opened up yesterday in the war of words between the judiciary and the Home Secretary, as the country's most senior judge attacked proposals by Michael Howard to abolish the right to elect trial by jury.

Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, said the right was a "valuable principle" and vital if the public was to believe in the fairness of the court system. He also warned that it could lead to injustice.

Mr Howard has clashed repeatedly with the judiciary during his controversial four year tenure at the Home Office.

Lord Bingham's latest criticism follow proposals by Mr Howard to speed up the criminal justice system. Lord Bingham, said that some of the changes "seem wrong in principle" and that he feared the reforms "might lead to error".

Among the most controversial suggestions is the removal of a defendants' automatic right to have a case dealt with by a jury for a series of offences that currently can be heard either by magistrates or in the Crown Court.

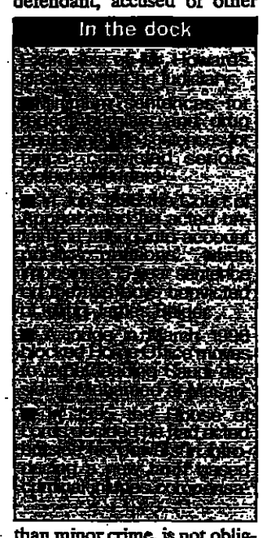
Among offences that can be heard by magistrates or at a Crown Court are theft, possession of an offensive weapon and gross indecency. An estimated 35,000 cases a year would be affected by the move, which is intended to result in more cases being dealt with by magistrates to avoid delays and extra expense.

The plan was condemned by the Law Society and the Bar Council, who believe it is a fundamental right.

Lord Bingham, speaking to magistrates in Gloucester last night, said: "I ... consider that it is an important guarantee of public acceptance of that unique role and function that a defendant, accused of other than minor crime, is not obliged *against his will to be tied by* justices [magistrates].

"It is not a question of crown court trial being fairer than trials in magistrates' court, or jurors being more open-minded than justices. It is a question of public perception.

In the dock



Labour to axe rights quangos

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Labour is planning to abolish the quangos on race and sex discrimination and create a powerful human rights commission to police civil liberties.

A Blair administration would incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into law and senior Labour figures believe there should be one body to enforce its provisions.

Supporters of the plan point out that a single organisation would enjoy a higher profile and save expenditure. It is envisaged that the new "super quango" could incorporate the functions of the Data Protection Registrar and the Fair Employment Commission in Northern Ireland, which combats discrimination on grounds of religion. The new body would also champion the rights of the disabled and victims of "ageism".

Senior figures at the two biggest commissions are aware of the plans, and there private misgivings that a "single rights commission" would not promote the aspirations of women and ethnic minorities as strongly as the existing system. There are also fears about job losses.

Herman Ouseley, chair of the CRE, is to express caution about the idea in the next edition of his organisation's *Connections* magazine. In the article he contends that while there is a strong argument for a single body, it would only enjoy his support if it could be proved that a single body enhanced the opportunities of the most disadvantaged sections of society.

Elizabeth Hodder, deputy chairwoman of the EoC, said there would have to be a "comprehensive and objective" debate about a human rights commission: "It should not be at the expense of the dilution of existing rights under sex discrimination legislation."

Despite the EoC's caution, Kamlesh Bahl, its chairwoman, would be uniquely placed to take over as head of the new commission because of her gender and Asian ethnic origin.

Her past association with the Conservative Party is unlikely to be a disadvantage. A Blair administration might be well disposed towards someone who does not necessarily see increased public expenditure as the solution to problems.

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Election defeat not an option for faithful

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The closest Tory loyalists could come to defeatism yesterday was to talk in hushed tones about the possibility of a hung result in the May election; with no overall majority in the Commons for John Major.

While former ministers were broadcasting their fears of clear-cut defeat to the nation, the Conservative Central Council was assembling in Bath to be rallied to the flag by Brian Mawhinney, the Party Chairman.

But the council representatives – largely elderly officers of the country's constituency associations – needed little encouragement.

While MPs at Westminster were this week talking of the possibility, if not likelihood, of losing as many as 100 seats in the election, the party activists were talking of getting back into power with the same kind of 20-seat majority Mr Major won in 1992.

One woman from South Thanet said that while some people talked of a 60-seat Tory majority, she thought 20 was about right. "We'll get a majority, but it could be about the same as last time," she said. "It'll be a tight squeeze," she added.

A man from Hemel Hempstead echoed that view, saying: "I imagine it'll be more tight this time. A majority of 100 would be nice but it's more likely to be 10 or 20." A similar view came from a man from Chelmsford, who said: "It'll be small but not much different from last time."

But there was also talk of an even tighter result – though not defeat. "It wouldn't surprise me if it was a hung parliament," a man from Bath said. "It's not looking brilliant at the moment."

But the Conservative grass roots activists refused even to consider the possibility that Mr Major might have to stand down, as leader, following election defeat.

While John Biffen and Edwina Currie, two former ministers, were painting that scenario in radio broadcasts yesterday, the party faithful were busily uniting behind Mr Major, defying the faint hearts and deploring defeatist talk.

"He's a fine chap," said a man from Milton Keynes, when asked about Mr Major. "And I've not ever thought about the succession, because it is not happening."

One man from Charnwood, Stephen Dorrell's new constituency, said Mr Major would be the next leader, though he fancied his own MP, Mr Dorrell, for some time in the future. "I think he would make a good leader," he said. But the man from West Chelmsford was more representative of the general mood. "Older Cabinet ministers would go and new people would come into the Cabinet, and new runners would enter the race. There's plenty of time yet. Let's see, shall we?" he said.

No laughing matter: Comic relief and red noses gave little mood for optimism among the Tory faithful at Bath yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

Watts cranks up the party gaffe machine

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The culture of bar-room bores which has infected dinner parties in East Anglia appeared to be spreading to the Tory Party yesterday after a second minister caused outrage with off-the-cuff remarks.

John Watts, the Transport minister, appalled environmental activists by saying he would be happy to see the roads protester nicknamed Swampy "buried in concrete".

It came as the Prime Minister and Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, jumped to the defence of Home Office minister David Maclean who outraged liberal opinion by appearing to bracket Roisin McAliskey, held in custody for extradition to Germany on alleged IRA charges, with the convicted murderer Myra Hindley.

A tape recording was made of Mr Watts by Hull University students as he chatted after a meeting at the Tory headquarters. Mr Watts said: "I couldn't care less what Swampy says. I would happily bury him in concrete."

Mr Maclean, wrote to a 79-year-old constituent, Judith Naylor of Appleby, Cumbria, who had asked for compassion for Ms McAliskey, while she was pregnant and in prison without trial. He replied: "When the day comes that the evil scum of the IRA are no longer murdering the innocent, and our children are no longer tortured by the Hindley's of this world, then I am certain that when I no longer need all my compassion for the innocent, I shall be able to spare some for the perpetrators."

Mr Howard said: "The BBC's treatment of this story has been a disgrace. Their news bulletins this morning suggested David Maclean had equated Roisin McAliskey with Myra Hindley. That is completely untrue.

Mr Major said the reports of Mr Maclean's comments had been "grotesque".

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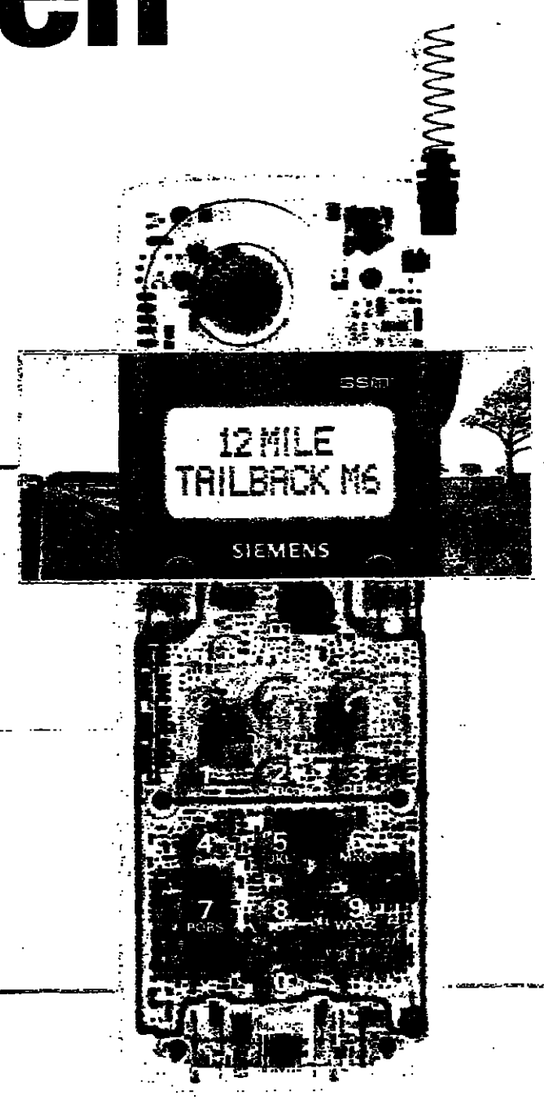

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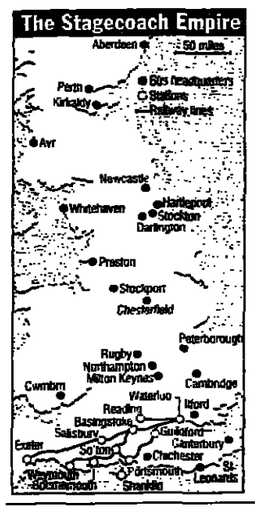
news

Train of misfortune: Tough ultimatum from watchdog leaves South West Trains facing ultimate loss of its £270m business

Rail company faces £1m fine over cancelled service



Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Stagecoach, the company that runs the troubled train line, South West Trains, faces a £1m fine from the rail watchdog and ultimately the loss of the £270m business unless it improves its cancellation-hit service.

The company, which runs commuter trains from London to Hampshire and Surrey, was also fined £750,000 last month for wiping 39 trains from its schedule. John O'Brien, the franchising director, took the decision after "passengers suffered an unacceptable level of cancellations".

SWT has had a run of bad fortune. First, work on a stretch of track took nine days to complete instead of a weekend. Secondly, the company shed 70 of its older, more experienced train drivers – forcing its to cut daily schedules. Managers also suggest that a small minority of *drivers are unhappy with the* new pay deal – accepted by the unions – and are wrecking timetables with a campaign of "non co-operation".

This will cut little ice with passengers. More than 100,000 rail commuters faced nightmare journeys home yesterday after trains were reduced in length and then slowed to a crawl because of a track fire. "I've been delayed for three hours," said Louise Cronk, a 26-year-old planning consultant. "This has become a part of everyday life. I'm just fed up."

Mr O'Brien has a string of financial penalties he can impose *under the contract with Stage*coach. In the case of SWT, Stagecoach would face substantial fines if it ran less than 98.5 per cent of its daily scheduled service.

The train firm has been *called in to explain poor service* levels twice in the first 12 months under private ownership. The government rules mean if any operator breaches the agreed service levels three times in three years, substantial fines will be imposed.

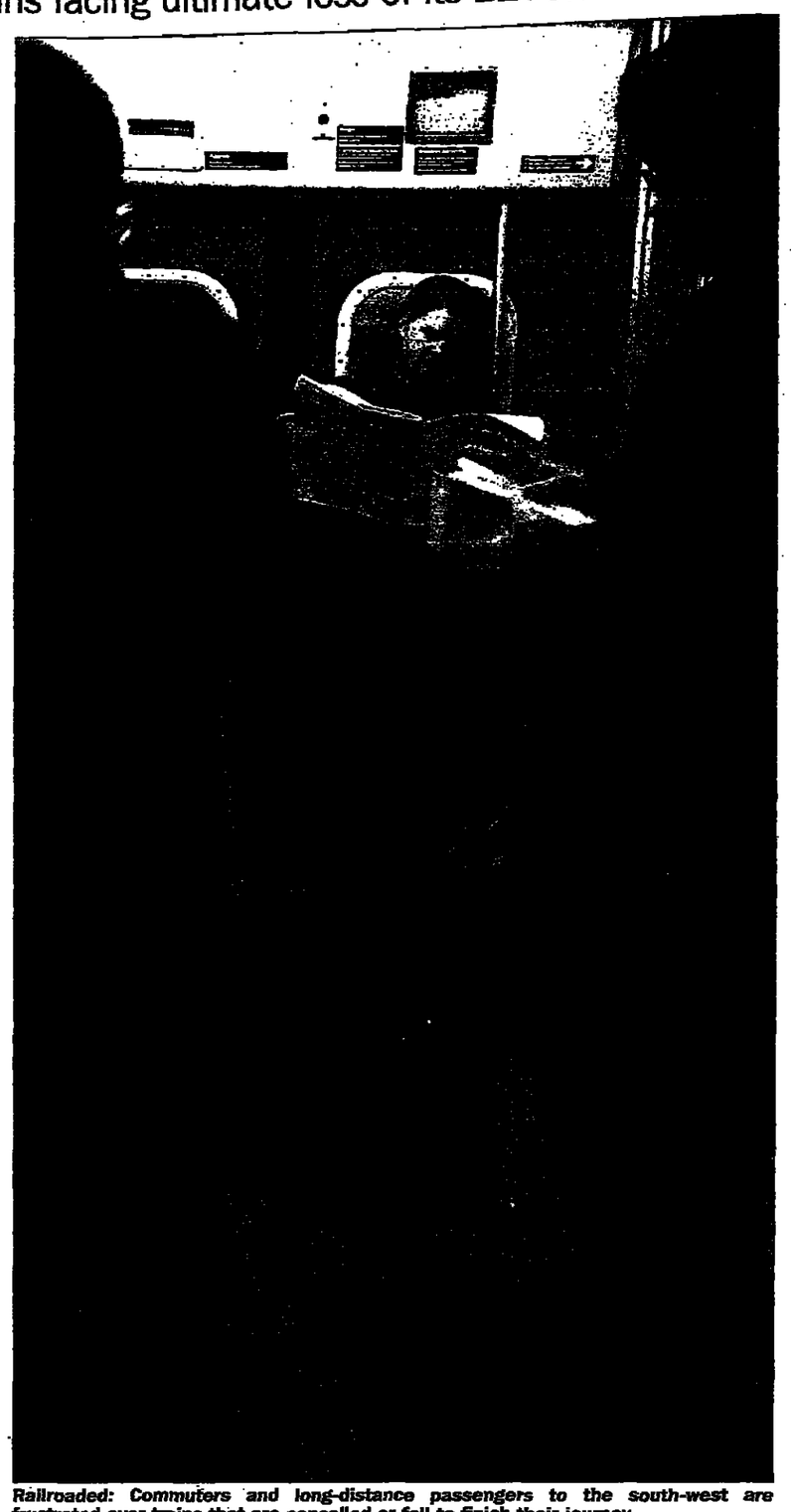
Managers first met civil servants last summer when worn bearings on some older carriages forced SWT to cut back on the length of trains. They were called in again to explain why service levels dipped below the 98.5 per cent limit in February after SWT cut driver numbers by 10 per cent.

Opraf, the office of passenger franchising, will levy the £1m fine if SWT breaches the limit again in April. Stagecoach could lose the franchise – which would cost the company its performance bond worth £20m - if service levels dip below 97.5 per cent.

*Brian Cox, the managing di*rector of SWT, said the company was confident of "meeting the Opraf targets". "I think Opraf has made this announcement ... to show MPs it has teeth and knows what it is doing. We plan to have a full service running again by April 1," he said.

Save Our Railways, the rail pressure group, called for the service to be nationalised. "It was the first to fall into public hands, the first to go wrong and should be the first back into the private sector," said national secretary Keith Bill.

He added: "The public should be aware that a £1m fine for Stagecoach, who get £60m a year to run it,will have as little effect as using a peashooter against an elephant."



***Railroaded:** Commuters and long-distance passengers to the south-west are* **frustrated over trains that are cancelled or fail to finish their journey**

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Bus firm that took the fast route into trouble

Michael Harrison and Randeep Ramesh

When the bus company Stagecoach won the franchise to run South West Trains just over a year ago, its chairman, Brian Souter, paid a visit to his new business. He was amazed to discover that SWT received 40,000 letters of complaint a year from passengers. The Stagecoach chairman said his bus companies received virtually no such letters, adding: "We judge cus*tomer satisfaction by the num*ber of bricks we get through the window."

The glass is still intact at SWT's offices in Blackfriars Road, a stone's throw from Waterloo station, but the brickbats are flying thick and fast.

How different it all seems to February last year, when Stagecoach became the first private company to take over one of the country's 25 rail franchises. John Watts, Minister for Railways and Roads, greeted "this historic announcement as excellent news for passengers".

Stagecoach trumpeted plans to introduce more services: "We firmly believe the route to success lies in attracting more people to our services and this means more, not less trains."

Thirteen months on, the crisis SWT has run into is all too predictable, according to railway managers. Although Stagecoach was granted a generous subsidy deal – it will receive £368m over the life of the franchise – it had its work cut out *to make a profit while surviving* on a declining level of taxpayers' support. By 2003, the Government says it will have saved £243m by privatising SWT.

"With a service like SWT, there are limits to how much you can push revenues," says one railway executive. "It is difficult to grab a bigger share [of the market], so you have to rely on the overall market growing, and that is not happening."

SWT decided to do the obvious thing – maximise fare income from its existing passengers, while cutting costs. Critics now say SWT is undermanaged. "The general problem is the lack of managers," says one observer. "The system is left to run itself."

An example of SWT's management style was an attempt to appease irate customers by offering free travel for a day to compensate for the recent spate of cancellations. The offer was only intended to apply to SWT's lines but ticket offices began handing out free travel everywhere, including Eurostar services to Paris, until a frantic message was sent out from SWT headquarters instructing staff to limit availability.

But the biggest cost-saving measure so far, and the cause of SWT's current predicament, is the axeing of 70 drivers, a tenth of the total, through a voluntary redundancy programme. At the same time, it decided to begin shifting trains between depots. For instance, those operating on the Reading-to-Brighton route were moved to the Basingstoke depot. As the drivers there were unfamiliar with the route, SWT had to hire in "pilot drivers" from another private train operator.

It would not have mattered had Stagecoach been able to treat SWT like one of its bus companies. Outside London, *the bus industry is not only pri*vatised but deregulated. Operators can axe services and even run buses for free to drive out the opposition. In 1993, a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report found the company's Southdown subsidiary charged uneconomic fares in Bognor Regis. In 1994, Mr Souter gave undertaking of "good behaviour" to the Director General of Fair Trading for two of Stagecoach's bus companies. Last year, after the MMC investigated Stagecoach's activities in Darlington, it concluded the company had acted in a manner which was "predatory, deplorable and against the public interest".

The City has bought the Stagecoach success story, so far. Mr Souter started the company with his sister, Ann Gloag, 26 years ago, with £25,000 and two coaches. When the business was floated on the stock market in 1993 it was worth £100m. It is now valued at £1.8bn.

But the acquisition of SWT and the equally controversial £825m takeover of the train leasing company Porterbrook, last summer, have come at a hefty price. As of last October, it had borrowings of £750m against shareholders' funds of £143m.

And there are signs of nervousness on the stock market. Shares are down from their year-high of 799p and yesterday lost another 23p, to 733.5p.

A chairman's chant

"If you go down to Marsham Street you'll never believe your eyes;
If you go down to Marsham Street you're sure of a big surprise.
The Porterbrook sale was never expected
Poor Sir George is feeling rejected
And Mr Watts will never be re-elected!"
Brian Souter, executive chairman, in a speech to rail executives last September was reported to have sung this ditty to the tune of the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'

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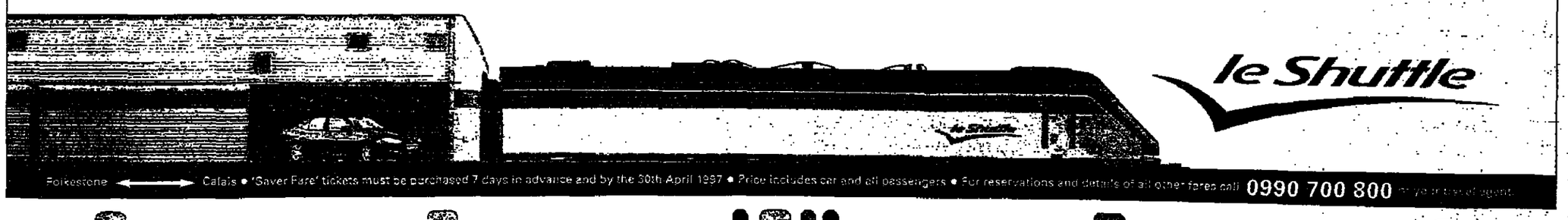

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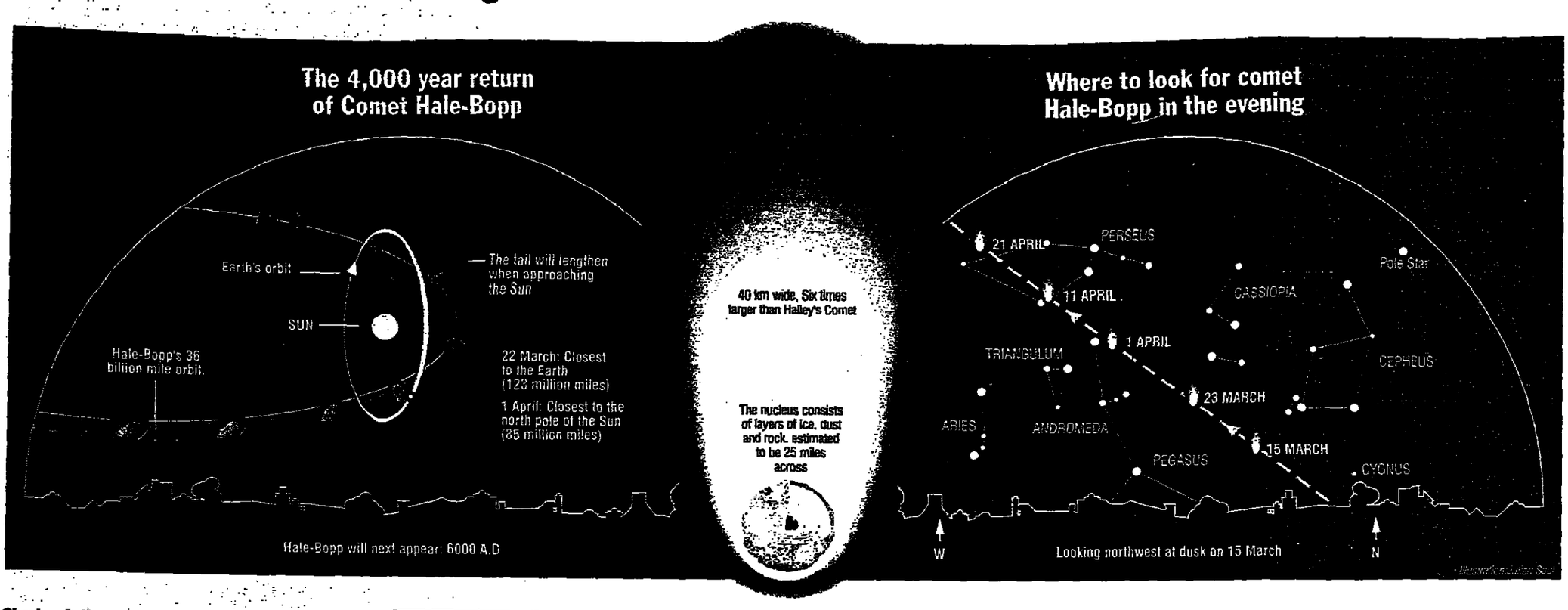
Brightest way to chase the tail of the comet



Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Astronomers say it is the brightest comet we will see for the rest of this century – and from this evening it should be visible to anyone with a pair of binoculars.

Comet Hale-Bopp, a 40km-wide "dirty snowball" of mud and ice has already delighted astronomers by producing a bright show that has far outdone two predecessors in the past 10 years, Halley's Comet in 1986 and Comet Hyukatake last year.

"It's like London buses," said Duncan Copp, of Mill Hill Observatory near London yesterday. "You wait for years and then they all turn up at once."

Unlike its predecessors, which were hard to see without telescopes, Hale-Bopp should be easily visible after dark and before dawn with the naked eye, though Dr Copp suggests that those wanting a really good view should take a pair of binoculars, as they offer a wider field of view than a telescope.

"To view it in the evening, you want an unobstructed view of the north-west horizon," he said. "You can see it at any time after twilight. It is an impressive sight, though people could be disappointed if they don't get away from lights." Just before sunrise it should be visible on the north-east horizon.

Those who do take the trouble will see the bright nucleus, made of a frozen conglomerate of ice and interstellar dust, and the tail, consisting of gases boiling off from the nucleus as it nears the sun on its 8,000-year round trip. For that reason, the tail points away from the sun, rather than in the direction of the comet's travel.

Its closest approach to the Earth will be on 22 March, when it will be 123 million miles away from us, further than we are from the sun, and its closest approach to the sun occurs on 1 April, when it will be 85 million miles away. (The Earth is 93 million miles from the sun.)

Those keen to photograph the comet need a camera whose lens can be set to an exposure of minutes, and should use fast film – at least 400 ASA – and a tripod.

Flying heaps of ice which are key to the origins of life

Hale-Bopp is more than a pretty light, writes **Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe**

To say that Comet Hale-Bopp is a "40km-long flying mountain of ice" would be to ignore the far wider importance of comets in the scheme of things. Recent studies suggest that comets similar to Hale-Bopp were responsible for giving the Earth its oceans, its atmosphere and perhaps even life.

The most detailed information concerning comets has come from spaceprobe studies of Comet Halley in 1986. These show that nearly half their mass consists of highly complex organic molecules, similar in spectral properties to bacterial cells. The assortment of smaller organic molecules found in comets' gaseous envelopes results from the breakup of more complex organic structures.

It has recently become clear that the Earth's atmosphere could not have produced the organic building blocks needed to start life. These are now thought by a majority of planetary scientists and geochemists to have come from comets.

Between 4,500 million years ago when the Earth was formed and 3,800 million years ago, our planet was pummelled by comets and meteorites, giving rise to the Hadean (hellish) epoch. Towards the end of this epoch, the oceans, the atmosphere and primitive life came into being, at almost exactly the same time. Moreover, there is evidence that the carbonaceous deposits associated with the Earth's oldest rocks – laid down during this period – may have had a biological origin.

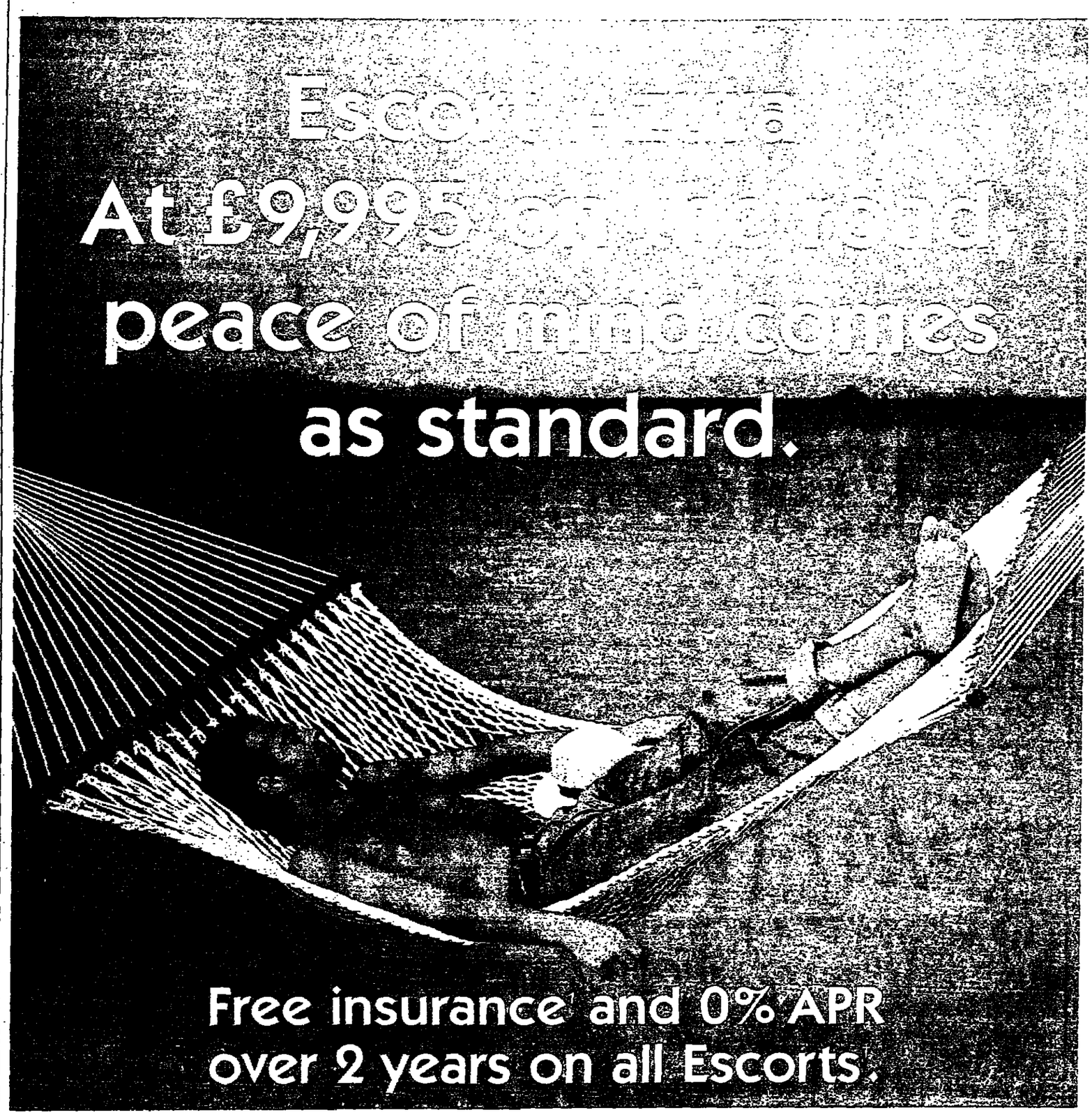
Because the conditions prevailing on the Earth at this time were far too inhospitable for life to originate, it seems reasonable to think that fully fledged microbial life may have been arriving along with the comets. Cometary life then took root on Earth at the first moment that favourable conditions evolved.

The spectacular tail of a comet, such as is now seen in Comet Hale-Bopp, is caused by the release of dust particles embedded in the frozen crust which evaporates as it approaches the Sun. However, when dust production is seen at great distances from the Sun, a different explanation is required. Comet Halley was still throwing out dust when it had receded beyond the orbit of Jupiter, and a similar release was seen in Comet Hale-Bopp in August 1995.

A few months ago I, together with Professor Sir Fred Hoyle and microbiologist Professor David Lloyd of Cardiff University, argued that this remarkable behaviour could reasonably be explained if microbiology was at work in liquid domains beneath a hard-frozen crust. Bacterial activity can release large amounts of gases, creating high-pressure pockets and causing sporadic explosions of the overlying crust – rather like the fermentation of liquor in sealed jars.

On the comet, the crust could shatter and then refreeze, leading to sporadic outbursts. When you watch the spectacular outbursts of Comet Hale-Bopp in the coming days, consider for a moment that you might be witnessing the process by which the fabric of life is transferred throughout the Universe.

Chandra Wickramasinghe is Professor of Applied Mathematics and Astronomy at the University of Wales in Cardiff. With Sir Fred Hoyle, he has written numerous book and papers dealing with the cosmic origins of life. Their latest book, Life on Mars? – the case for a cosmic heritage, *is published next month by CLinical Press, Bristol.*



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news

Leaked letter widens schism in Jewry

Reformists accuse Chief Rabbi of no longer speaking for all Jews

Ian Burrell

Battle of orthodoxies: The Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks (left) and Rabbi Hugo Gryn, who died last year

'Jew praying in the synagogue on Yom Kippur' by Mauricy Gottlieb, from Jewish Art, to be published in May by Harry N. Abrams, price £120

The rift between the Orthodox and Reform Jewish communities in Britain dramatically deepened yesterday after it was disclosed that the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, had accused Rabbi Hugo Gryn, a Holocaust survivor who died last August, of being a destroyer of Judaism.

The attack, in a leaked letter to a right-wing Orthodox Jewish leader, intensifies the row between the Orthodox tradition and the Reformists over Dr Sacks and his attitude to Rabbi Gryn, a Reformist.

Last night, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, spokesman for the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, called on Dr Sacks to renounce his title. "Clearly, the Chief Rabbi no longer represents all Jews and speaks only for the Orthodox sector," he said.

"He no more represents Reform and liberal Jews than does the Archbishop of Canterbury represent Catholics and Methodists."

The acrimonious dispute followed Dr Sacks' non-attendance at the funeral of Rabbi Gryn, which angered the Reform movement, and his presence at a later memorial ceremony, which in turn caused outcry among some Orthodox Jews.

In his letter, leaked to the *Jewish Chronicle*, Dr Sacks said that his only reason for attending the memorial was to avoid giving the Reform movement a reason for appointing its own chief rabbi. He said Rabbi Gryn was one of "those who destroy the faith" as part of a "false grouping".

He assured Dayan Chanoch Padwa, the 90-year-old head of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, that he was paying recognition to Rabbi Gryn, "not as a Reform rabbi but as a survivor of the Holocaust".

Supporters of Rabbi Gryn, who was known to millions through his appearances on BBC Radio 4's *Moral Maze* and Thought for the Day on the *Today* programme, said the letter could lead to large numbers of British Jews dissociating themselves from the Chief Rabbi.

Although Dr Sacks is technically the Chief Rabbi only of the United Synagogues, the main Orthodox group, he is seen by many Jews and non-Jews as the leader of British Jewry.

Dr Sacks described the leaking of his "Not for Publication" letter, which was written in Hebrew, as a "scandalous betrayal" and attempted a damage limitation exercise by writing an explanation of the context of the letter in the *Jewish Chronicle*.

He praised Rabbi Gryn as "a man of courage and deep humanity", but stopped short of retracting his attacks on his religious work.

Dr Sacks called on all Anglo-Jewish leaders to join in a Coalition for Peace in the Community to prevent disunity. "We must now call a halt to the debate over Hugo Gryn. May he be allowed to rest in peace, and may we, at last, learn to live in peace," he said.

He issued a seven-point list of principles for mutual respect between Jews, calling on them to work together on matters affecting them all – such as fighting anti-Semitism, remembering the Holocaust and improving relations with other faiths such as Christianity and Islam.

Last night there was much speculation last night on the hidden agenda of the person responsible for the leaking.

Dr Sacks would only say: "The leak was a breach of confidence. It flouted the Jewish laws of privacy. It was intended to destroy the relationships of trust essential to communal harmony."

But Matthew Calman, the editor of *London Jewish News*, suggested the leak was a deliberate "trap" laid for reformists, in order to re-open the divide in the Jewish community.

He said: "We have to ask who leaked this letter and why? The answer to that question is that Jonathan Sacks has made enormous strides towards reconciliation among the different movements in Anglo-Jewry over the last five years.

"The people who leaked this letter are his right-wing critics who despise Rabbi Romain and Reform. It is an attempt to destroy the kind of reconciliation which I know Rabbi Romain and his colleagues are working for."

Yesterday, the "trap" appeared to have worked. In a joint statement the British leaders of Reform Judaism called for a rethink of the post of Chief Rabbi. The statement said: "It seems that, constantly, the Chief Rabbinate is forced into two conversations, embodying two sets of language and two messages tailored to the respective recipients. This is simply not consonant with a community of trust and integrity.

"He says that his whole purpose is to 'gain a victory' over us and then calls for peace."

Rapists lose right to quiz victims

Ian Burrell

Alleged rapists who defend themselves will lose the automatic right to cross-examine their victims under plans announced yesterday by Michael Howard, the Home Secretary.

The move is aimed at ending the "double rape" of a victim, who is forced to relive her experience in minute detail by answering questions posed by the attacker in open court.

It follows the Old Bailey case last summer of Julia Mason, who suffered six traumatic days of court-room interrogation by the man who raped her twice. The case caused a public outcry.

Mr Howard said: "I think it is right that the courts should have the discretion, where necessary, to protect such vulnerable victims."

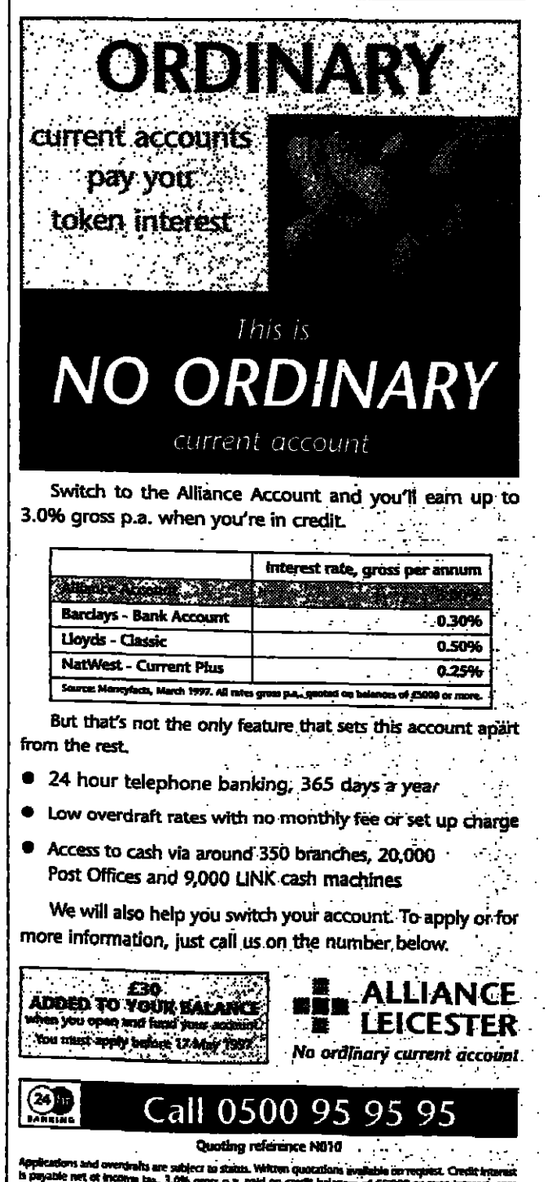
It is proposed that judges would be given discretion to stop defendants who are representing themselves in court from personally cross-examining victims of rape and other offences. Instead, cross-examination could only be conducted by a representative of the defendant.

The move follows outrage that Mrs Mason, 34, had to face prolonged interrogation by her attacker, Ralston Edwards, who turned up in court in the same clothes he wore on the night of the rape. Edwards, who had raped before, was given two life sentences for the attack.

"He was reliving the rape," said Mrs Mason after the trial. "No other woman should go through this again."

She waived her right to anonymity to press for the law to be changed and complained to the European Commission of Human Rights about her treatment. "He was taunting me with questions about whether I wore any underwear, and implying he knew where my family lived," she said. "It was as if I had been raped once by Edwards, and again by the British judicial system."

Victim Support yesterday welcomed the plans. "Too many women don't report sex crimes because they fear the ordeal that faces them if they do," Paul Collins, its spokesman, said.



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West faces military dilemma as Albania fragments

Emma Daly
Tirana
Andrew Gumbel

Western powers found themselves increasingly embroiled in Albania's anarchy yesterday as gunmen fired on US, German and Italian military forces trying to rescue Western residents. The United States was forced to suspend its evacuation efforts after two US Marine helicopters were fired on from the ground while attempting to take American nationals to safety.

Gunmen also fired shots from a police van at German troops arriving at a military airport by helicopter to bring out stranded Western citizens. The Germans shot back in what was believed to be the first time German soldiers have used weapons in anger abroad since 1945.

Amid the spreading chaos, and with almost nobody noticing, Sali Berisha effectively ceased to be president of Albania yesterday. With the whole country seemingly clamouring for his departure and all state authority supplanted by gangs of armed men, the international community chose to leave him languishing alone in his palace and tried instead to broker a solution to the crisis with Bashkim Fino, his newly appointed prime minister.

Mr Fino and ministers spent the day in talks on board an Italian warship with Franz Vranitzky, the former Austrian chancellor and special envoy for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and begged the international community to intervene.

Mr Vranitzky and other Western officials said they might consider some kind of policing operation to round up the rebels' weapons, but only under strict conditions. Mr Vranitzky said he saw no alternative to outside military intervention. "I will report that there is no alternative as far as I can see. The decision has to be taken very quickly."

An immediate military operation has been excluded by Nato, the US and the Western European Union, and any subsequent action is likely to be promoted by individual countries, not international institutions. "First we must have a government that exercises real authority.

"And secondly, any intervention must have the agreement of all parties in Albania, including the rebel commanders in Vlora and elsewhere. But we're a long way from fulfilling either condition," Italy's deputy foreign minister, Piero Fassino, said.

Diplomats said they saw Mr Fino, a member of the Socialist Party, which is bitterly opposed to Mr Berisha, as Albania's last hope.

The purpose of Mr Vranitzky's mission, they said, was to give him every possible political support and then sponsor negotiations with the rebel commanders who have ousted the state in cities across the country.

"If Fino doesn't work out, it is not clear if there will be any political authority left at all and then we will have to rethink our strategy from scratch," one European diplomatic source said.

One European diplomatic source said: "Berisha has been completely sidelined.

"As far we are concerned, Fino is the last resort and if he doesn't work out it is not clear there will be any political authority left at all."

As for Mr Berisha, he told a French reporter yesterday that he had no intention of resigning. But the pressure on him to leave the country, or face a possible public lynching, was growing. His children have already left for Italy, as has his unpopular former defence minister, Safet Zhulali. Mr Fassino said it was by no means certain they would be offered asylum.

Aid agencies prepared to send emergency supplies but said the anarchy was hindering their efforts. "There is definitely a need for emergency food and medical help," said Michael Kleiner, of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Red Cross offices and stores across Albania have been burned down and looted.

The United Nations evacuated most of its staff out of the country. Two officials from the UN Children's Fund remained behind to try to co-ordinate UN aid efforts but could not evaluate needs immediately because of the chaos.

Reservations only: French paratroops push away Albanians trying to board a helicopter at Durres that had been sent to evacuate French nationals Photograph: AFP

'Now all the people have guns, they will never give them up'

Emma Daly
Tirana

A curiously muted chaos has consumed the streets of Tirana. Nobody is in charge of the Albanian capital, and random gunmen are driving up and down the city's streets, firing into the air. And yet, there seems to be no air of panic. There is no civil war here, nor is there likely to be: it is more like a popular revolt against a corrupt leadership, fuelled both by fear and by a plentiful supply of weapons.

Residents of Tirana were out early yesterday morning, stockpiling whatever food was available, mostly apples and oranges on sale at a few stalls in the market. There were long queues at the few bakeries which opened yesterday; many were closed owing to a shortage of flour, following the sacking of Tirana's main flour depot on Thursday, when some food stores were looted.

Riza Lahi, a retired military pilot, was loaded down with plastic bags containing huge hunks of feta and yellow cheese, olives, frozen hamburgers.

"I didn't even ask the prices. I just spent all the money I had in my pocket," he said. "I love my motherland, and I don't want to leave, but I'm waiting to see what happens to the political situation."

Dozens of his compatriots, however, were lining up outside the manicured lawns of the US diplomatic compound, where US Marines organised the evacuation by helicopter of about 300 foreigners, mostly Americans, often to the sound of gun-fire. The airlift was suspended in the afternoon after a helicopter was hit by an anti-aircraft missile. Westerners lined up in life-jackets and helmets to board the helicopters sent down from the Nato force in Bosnia.

Bob Durham and his Albanian wife Eva stood with their 19-month-old son Jimmy. Why were they leaving? "Because her mother was hit in the head by a bullet yesterday and my brother-in-law was hit in the face by a bullet today," Mr Durham said succinctly.

Neither was badly wounded, but it was enough to persuade the Durhams to accept the help of the cavalry.

By 9am, Tirana's two hospitals had received nine dead and 159 wounded by gunfire. By 11am, the death toll had risen by two, and during a 15-minute visit to one emergency ward, two men were rushed in with bullet wounds.

Tonin Pellumbi was at home in Laprake, a Tirana suburb, when a bullet struck just above his hip. "He was hit inside the house," said Vladimir Goga, the neighbour who drove Mr Pellumbi to hospital. "It's terrible, too many people are shooting, especially in this area. Nobody can leave their house. Everyone is afraid, and there is so much noise."

> ❝There is no civil war here, more a revolt fuelled by a huge supply of weaponry❞

Mr Pellumbi moaned in pain as doctors extracted the bullet. He was sent home soon after with no real damage done. Another young man had meanwhile been admitted, hit in the thigh as he sat at home chatting to a neighbour.

In the grounds of the hospital, spent cartridges marked the path of one of the many gunman firing at will in the city. Down the road, three loose horses nosed through a rubbish bin, ignored by passers-by; 50 yards away, a man fired his Kalashnikov into the air. No-one turned a hair. Opposite the head-quarters of the Shik secret police, soldiers massed at a base containing six tanks. We approached the gate. Not unexpectedly, the guard leapt up, pointed his rifle and screamed at us to leave the area. We did.

It was the same at the presidential palace, where plain-clothes gunmen and soldiers guarded Mr Berisha's office. They were very edgy. By late afternoon, the foreign press was comprehensively confused. A phalanx of television cameras and reporters stood in the main boulevard leading to Skenderbeg Square as two police Armed Personnel Carriers, accompanied by carloads of gunmen, drove up and down, firing in the air.

The gunmen flashed the occasional V-sign, symbol of the ruling Democratic Party, but it was not clear if they were trying to protect the President, intimidate the opposition Prime Minister, or perform for the cameras. About 100 soldiers ran into the presidential compound but, again, we had no idea why.

"No one has any control," said Kastor, a secret policeman who had abandoned all hope in Albania and in the regime he served; he was standing outside the American diplomatic compound, trying to get seats on the US airlift. He proffered his passport, complete with one new and two used American visas. He had been to the US, he said, for "training as special policeman".

His wife was articulate, and depressed. "This war situation is terrible - I want my children to live, not to die," she said.

"I don't see a future here, and now all the people have guns. And knowing the Albanian mentality, they will never give them up."

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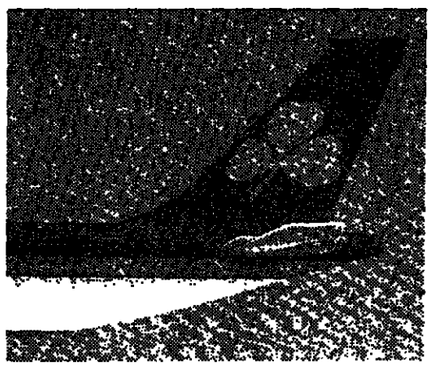

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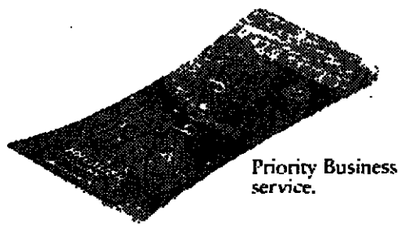

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With Sten guns and sovereigns Britain and US saved Iran's throne for the Shah

The Cold War

In the third of a series of articles, **Robert Fisk** writes about the fall of prime minister Mossadeq

Monty Woodhouse personally flew the guns into Iran from Baghdad aboard an RAF aircraft to prepare for war with the Soviet Union. He bought Iranian "riyals" for sovereigns and - at a secret rendezvous in the Tehran suburbs - handed the cash to one of two mysterious Iranian brothers to help finance plans for the overthrow of Mohamed Mossadeq.

To this day, Operation Boot – the original British intelligence plot to get rid of the democratically elected Mossadeq and restore the Shah of Iran to his throne in 1953 – fascinates Colonel Monty Woodhouse, now 79 but with a mind as alert as that of a man half his age. "I've sometimes been told that I was responsible for opening the door to the ayatollahs," he says. "But we delayed Khomeini's return to Tehran by a quarter of a century."

The Iran of the early Fifties had some remarkable parallels with the revolution of 1979. The young Shah – "a nice, rather weak man ... always waiting to be advised", in Col Woodhouse's words - was dominated by his sister Ashraf but opposed by a vocal opposition that included Ayatollah Sayed Abolghassem Kashani, an influential Shiite cleric, the communist Tudeh party and the nationalists led by the 70-year old landowner Mossadeq. His government voted to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) whose profits were safeguarded by London executives whom Col Woodhouse now describes as "stupid, boring, pigheaded and tiresome".

> "We delayed Khomeini's return to Tehran by a quarter of a century"

In August 1951, Monty Woodhouse arrived at the British embassy in Tehran, the imposing pseudo-Greek edifice in which Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt had met to decide the post-war world only eight years earlier. "My employers were SIS [Secret Intelligence Service] but my cover was the Foreign Office and I was on the embassy staff," Woodhouse says. "I think I was officially called 'information officer'."

The Central Intelligence Agency's Middle East chief, Kim Roosevelt – grandson of Theodore – would finally see the plot to fruition, organising the Tehran street mobs and the Iranian army against Mossadeq. But Col Woodhouse, fresh from his role as a Special Operations Executive officer in German-occupied Greece, was an enthusiastic proponent of Operation Boot and eagerly sold the idea to the Americans as a shield against Soviet subversion. "When we knew what the prejudices of our collaborators were, we played all the more on these prejudices." Woodhouse admits in his retirement home in Oxford.

When Mossadeq was about to break diplomatic relations with Britain in the summer of 1952 – and when Iran seemed to be on the verge of anarchy – Col Woodhouse was ordered to arm tribal leaders in northern Iran who could be relied on to oppose a possible Soviet invasion.

"I collected the light arms in an RAF plane from Habbaniyah, an RAF station in Iraq, and eventually landed at Tehran after losing our way over the Zagros mountains. They were mostly rifles and Sten guns. We drove north in a truck, avoiding check-points by using by-roads. Getting stopped was the sort of thing one never thinks about. We buried the weapons – I think my underlings dug the holes. And for all I know these weapons are still hidden somewhere in northern Iran. It was all predicated on the assumption that war would break out with the Soviet Union."

Mohamed Mossadeq, centre, at his trial on 9 November 1953 (Photograph: Popperfoto). **Top right, Col Woodhouse; right, Allen Dulles, CIA director**

At this time, the plot to overthrow Mossadeq was in the hands of a British embassy official called Robin Zaehner – later Professor of Eastern Religions at Oxford. Zaehner, who is now dead, had cultivated two wealthy Iranian merchants, known as "the Brothers", each of whom had worked against German influence in Iran during the Second World War.

When the British were about to be thrown out of Iran, Col Woodhouse turned to Roger Goiran, the Tehran CIA station chief. "He was a really admirable colleague. He came from a French family, was bilingual, extremely intelligent and likable and had a charming wife and we all got on famously together; he was an invaluable ally to me when Mossadeq was throwing us out because I was able to hand on to him the contacts I had."

Col Woodhouse visited Washington after Eisenhower's presidential election victory and outlined his plan to the Americans: Operation Boot was to use the Brothers and an organisation of disenchanted army and police officers, parliamentary deputies, mullahs, editors and mob leaders to seize control of Tehran while tribal leaders would take over major cities, no doubt with the weapons the colonel had dumped in northern Iran.

Despite initial reluctance by the United States, Mossadeq's rejection of a set of Anglo-American proposals to solve the oil dispute – and the danger which he represented to the Shah – sealed his fate. While Kim Roosevelt travelled secretly to Iran, Col Woodhouse met with Princess Ashraf in Switzerland; she travelled to Tehran to try and persuade her brother that he should remain on his throne. A second emissary to visit the Shah with the same message was Brigadier General Norman Shwarzkopf, father of the man who would later command US forces against Iraq in 1991. After Roosevelt himself spoke to the Shah, the latter issued a decree dismissing Mossadeq as prime minister.

Col Woodhouse was in Japan when he heard how the mobs took to the streets against Mossadeq and of how the subsequent street fighting cost the lives of 300 people. "It was all Mossadeq's fault," he says now. "He was ordered by the Shah's 'firman' to leave. He called out his own thugs and he caused all the bloodbath. Our lot didn't – they behaved according to plan.

"What if we'd done nothing? It's a very difficult question to answer. What would relations have been between Mossadeq and the mullahs? Things would have got steadily worse. There would have been no restoration of BP - or AIOC as it then was. And the Shah would have been overthrown immediately, instead of 35 years later.

"It's quite remarkable that a quarter of a century passed between Operation Boot and the fall of the Shah. In the end, it was Khomeini who came out on top – but not until years later. I suppose some better use could have been made of the time that elapsed."

Col Woodhouse was already in retirement when the Islamic revolution changed Iran forever. "I felt very depressed," he says. "I felt that the work we had done was wasted, that a sort of complacency had taken over once the Shah had been restored. Things were taken for granted too easily."

Cut off from the intelligence world in which he once lived, Colonel Woodhouse, who was elected Tory MP for Oxford in 1959, is now translating a work of modern Greek history by his late wartime friend Panayotis Kanellopoulos. But he has not forgotten what Allen Dulles, the CIA director, said to him on his return to Washington in 1953. "That was a nice little egg you laid when you were here last time!" he told Woodhouse. It was the first such operation carried out by the Americans in the Cold War - and the last by the British.

Congress protests at China's rising crime

Teresa Poole
Peking

China's normally compliant parliament yesterday barked back, emboldened by widespread public dissatisfaction with crime and corruption. Delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC) registered their biggest ever protest vote when 40 per cent did not support the annual report of China's top prosecutor, Zhang Siqing, who just days earlier had promised "to get to the bottom" of cases involving any corrupt officials.

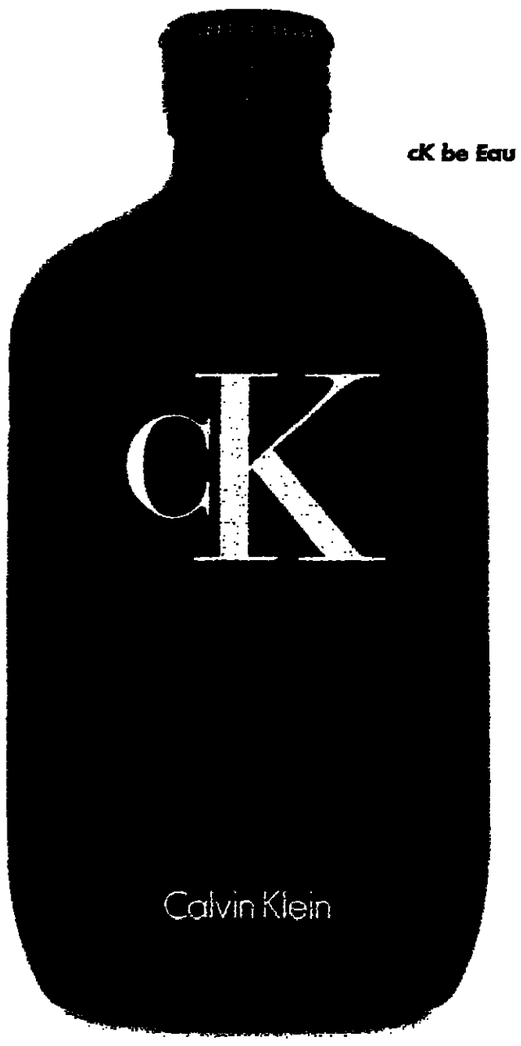
When the result was displayed on the electronic screen in the Great Hall of the People a wave of murmuring swept through the 2,720 delegates as they read the voting figures.

The unprecedented show of displeasure at the government's inability to tackle rising crime and corruption was also evident in the vote on the annual work report from the president of the Supreme People's Court, Ren Jianxin, with one-third of delegates withholding their support. As China embarks on the post-Deng Xiaoping era, crime and corruption often top surveys of public complaints.

The NPC delegates vote by pressing buttons which give them a choice of voting for, against or abstaining: a number prefer to show their reluctance by not pressing any button at all. It is widely assumed that the government has the power to determine how any delegate voted on any particular vote. In yesterday's vote on the Supreme People's Procuratorate report, 1,621 were in favour, 675 against, 390 abstained, and 34 did not vote at all.

Western human rights campaigners might not be comfortable with the sentiments behind yesterday's anti-crime votes. Since April last year, China has been in the grip of the "Strike Hard" anti-crime campaign, which saw a 17 per cent increase in arrests, worryingly swift convictions, and an unknown number of executions. Yet, many NPC delegates this year argued in favour of tougher penalties and a wider use of capital punishment, and were disappointed not to succeed.

New at Boots



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Shame is gangsters' deadliest weapon

Japanese bosses will pay to avoid humiliation, writes **Richard Lloyd Parry** in Tokyo

Once a year, the presidents and board members of Japan's biggest companies submit themselves to an awful torment. Every June these unhappy people, whose decisions affect the lives of workers and consumers all over the world, are forced to present themselves publicly and – would you believe it? – answer questions from their shareholders.

The ordeal of the annual shareholders' meeting (*sokai*, in Japanese) is usually finished in double-quick time, although this is by no means guaranteed.

Sometimes, horror of horrors, a shareholder may ask an awkward or searching question, or even express dissatisfaction with the board's performance. Worst of all, professional troublemakers set out deliberately to embarrass the mortified executives. They shout, they refuse to sit down, they make awkward allegations.

Faced with this humiliating prospect, the MDs and CEOs do what any sensitive captains of industry would do: they buy off the trouble-makers, for millions of pounds every year.

The corporate blackmailers are called *sokaiya*, and in the last week their extraordinary place in Japanese corporate life has been dramatically exposed. Yesterday, the president of Nomura, the world's biggest securities house, resigned to take responsibility for a scandal in which the company apparently channelled hundreds of millions of yen to a company with connections to a former extortionist.

Three days before, police arrested two executives of a leading food company, Ajinomoto, for allegedly paying some half a million pounds a year to protect their president from embarrassing questions.

These are strikingly large sums for what is, after all, only a shareholders' meeting. In the past, *sokaiya* have punished companies who refuse to pay up by a variety of means.

In 1982, a Sony shareholders' meeting was prolonged for thirteen hours by filibusters; three years ago the president of Fuji Film had bottles thrown at him by a spurned *sokaiya*. But these cases are extreme, as the case of Ajinomoto demonstrates. Typically, the shareholders' meeting lasted just half an hour. In 1995, apparently because of a failure to pay off *sokaiya*, it went on for over an hour. However uncomfortable, those extra forty minutes saved the company 100 million yen (£520,000).

The *sokaiya* are a uniquely Japanese institution, a product both of history and of the almost medieval importance of form in even the most modern companies. Incidents which would be routine at European or American shareholders' meetings – stroppy shareholders, aggressive heckling – are such anathema to the public image of corporations that they are prepared to buy peace and quiet.

"Japanese companies attach a great deal of importance to maintaining the dignity of their senior management," says Raisuke Miyawaki, a retired senior policeman, who now advises companies on how to deal with gangsters. "Actually, the bosses are a bit timid: if they are seen to make a mistake during the meeting, it's very shaming to them, so they want it to be as short as possible so that no one has a chance to ask questions."

In an attempt to frustrate the racketeers, companies have taken to holding their shareholders' meetings at the same time. These tactics have apparently worked: according to the police, there are about 1000 *sokaiya*, compared to nearly 7,000 before the change in the law. But since the passing of the anti-racketeering laws their methods have become both more ingenious and more brutal.

Three years ago, a Fuji Film executive responsible for the annual general meeting, ran into trouble with a group of *sokaiya*. Soon after, he was found dead, stabbed to death with a samurai dagger.

Nomura chief goes, page 22

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

Trader feels jagged edge of Russia's metals market

Phil Reeves
Moscow

You have a *mighty* London-based metals trading interest and a very irate Russian Interior Minister. Add to the mix, a contest over billions in potential profits, the shadow of organised crime, and *suspicions* of a Kremlin plot involving Boris Yeltsin's ex-bodyguard, and you have the picture. Russia's latest industrial scandal lacks nothing in intrigue.

The group is Trans-World Metals, which has in the last six years quietly built itself into the world's third largest aluminium *producer* by acquiring control of several of the huge, but largely moribund, Russian smelters where the Soviet Union used to churn out metal for missiles and aircraft.

The UK-based *firm's willingness* to brave the perilous waters of Russia's metals industry – which has seen regular murders, and where fortunes are quickly be made and lost – has given it sizeable stakes in smelters which account for nearly 40 per cent of the country's aluminium output. These include the world's largest at Bratsk in Siberia. This activity has generated vast profits for Trans-World, but now the future is clouded by an acrimonious dispute which has set the company against powerful elements within Russian officialdom.

Last week, grievances erupted into the open when the group's chairman, David Reuben, *published* an open letter in the *Wall Street Journal*, and elsewhere, addressed to the US Vice-President, Al Gore, and Russia's Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

In it he complained that, despite ploughing hundreds of millions of dollars *into Russia, the group now* "stands on the verge of seeing all our investments and achievements destroyed" by "a craven, political power play, Russian-style". There was, he continued, a move led by the Russian Interior Ministry and "renegade banks" to "re-privatise" aluminium enterprises.

A *particular target* of his complaint was General Anatoly Kulikov, Russia's hard-line Interior Minister, whom he accuses of wanting to restore state control of the national aluminium industry. Such a move, Mr Reuben's letter warned, would cause the international market *for investment in Russia to dry* up altogether.

However, this is more than a cautionary tale about foreign interests operating in a country which still has strong protective instincts.

Beneath the surface there is a complex, but crucial, sub-plot. For the last few weeks, some of the Russ*ian mass media – much of which* is under official influence – have focused on alleged crime in the aluminium industry. The issue has been championed by General Kulikov, who has made allegations of embezzlement and bribery about a company with links to Trans-World – *although it should be noted that* Trans-World has repeatedly stated that it has done nothing wrong.

It is believed that the motive for *such strong* official interest in the industry includes a political dimension – namely, to discredit Boris Yeltsin's security chief, Alexander Korzhakov, and one of his former deputy prime ministers, Oleg Soskovets. Both men were fired last year.

Since his ousting, Mr Korzhakov, a former *KGB officer with close ties* to the metals industry, has become an enemy of the Kremlin and Mr Chubais. He is loosely allied to Alexander Lebed, the ex-general who is often named as the favourite to win the presidency next time. After a brief stint as Mr Yeltsin's national security adviser last year, Mr Lebed was also sent packing – following a row with General Kulikov.

According to NTV's flagship current affairs programme, *Itogi*, elements in the aluminium industry financed Mr Lebed's brother, Alexei, in a successful bid to become a regional governor. The Interior Min*ister's assault on the industry* – or so the theory runs – is therefore partly an attempt to stop Mr Lebed turning to the same golden goose.

It is a murky business, shot through with speculation and political gamesmanship. It seems likely to fester on, aggravating international relations *and jeopardising jobs and incomes.*

Border deaths expose gulf in Middle East

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

It was meant to be a symbol of peace: 250 acres of orchards and fields on the Jordan river, protected by Jordanian soldiers, but freely visited by Israeli farmers and tourists. As visitors enjoyed the bucolic vista they would be reminded by the abandoned concrete bunkers and old minefields of an earlier, more violent period in the relations between Israel and Jordan.

It must have seemed a neat solution to diplomats and officials at the time of the signing of the peace treaty between the two countries in 1994. Jordan won back sovereignty over the patch of land at Naharim/Baqura, where the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers meet. In return the Jordanians recognised Israel's "private land ownership rights and property rights" for a renewable period of 25 years.

Just how distant this compromise was from the real world of the Middle East became clear this week when Ahmed Moussa Mustafa, a driver in the Jordanian tank corps, shot dead seven Israeli girls on a school outing. The "island of peace" became a death-trap. Teachers on the school bus said other Jordanian soldiers *did not shoot* at the gunman and only tackled him after a delay.

The ordinariness of Ahmed Moussa Mustafa suggests his action was the product of increasingly poisonous relations between Israel and Jordan, not of the mental derangement of one man. He is neither a Palestinian nor a devout Muslim nor has he any history of psychological problems. He is a Jordanian, married with three children, from a village near the northern city of the Irbid.

Possibly he carried out the murders because of the furious exchange between Jordan and Israel earlier in the week. King Hussein accused Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, of leading Arabs and Israelis "towards an abyss of blood." Yesterday An Israeli columnist suggested a report, since denied, that Mr Netanyahu had attributed this outburst to a history of mental instability in the Jordanian royal family, might have led to the gunman's attack.

The peace treaty was meant to mark a transformation in Middle East politics. King Hussein abandoned Iraq as his strategic ally and looked to Israel and the US. He wanted political rehabilitation, as well as forgiveness for $700m (£430m) debts, from Washington in return for the treaty. He wanted to insure himself, through American and Israeli friendship, against any threat to his monarchy emanating from an emerging Palestinian state.

Three years later, the diplomatic map looks different. The King and the Jordanian political leadership has acquired an almost visceral hatred of Mr Netanyahu. Dislike has grown ever since the Israeli leader failed to tell Jordan of his plan to open a tunnel in Jerusalem last year, which led to 61 Palestinian and 15 Israeli deaths. When Mr Netanyahu refused permission for Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, to fly from Amman to Gaza this month King Hussein slammed the phone down.

But there is more to this than Mr Netanyahu's failings. King Hussein rules as many Palestinians, more than 2 million, in Jordan as there are Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Any strain between the latter and Israel affects Jordan. King Hussein could not have signed the peace treaty with Israel three years ago if Mr Arafat had not signed the Oslo accords in 1993. Now this process is going into reverse. A crisis between Israel and Mr Arafat means a crisis with Jordan. King Hussein was the only Arab leader to cultivate Mr Netanyahu before the last election, but the Israeli Prime Minister is careless of past obligations. Probably he took King Hussein for granted, thinking him too weak to cause trouble. But Jordan is closer to the US than it was in 1994 in the wake of the Gulf war. Opposition to Israel in the Arab world is also more popular at every level than in the past.

It is also easier for Jordan to get along with the Palestinian leadership. Relations have improved with Mr Arafat because his grip on the West Bank is now so strong he no longer needs to worry that Jordan wants to return there. Palestinian fear that Jordan would re-establish its rule on the West Bank, which it held before 1967, was a constant source of tension.

It is easy enough to blame Mr Netanyahu for all this. In the wake of the Naharim massacre many Israelis will hold him responsible for their lives becoming more insecure. After all, last year he won the election by promising "peace with security". But a majority of Israelis voted for parties opposed, to a greater or lesser *extent, to the implementation* of the Oslo accords. Peace with Jordan was popular among Israelis because they thought no price had to be paid for it. Few realised that if a Palestinian state was denied and the occupation of the West Bank was not ended, then the basis for peace with the Jorda*nians as well as the Palestinians* would disappear.

Israeli girls, who were in the group that was attacked on the 'Island of peace', reading about the death of their friends Photograph: AFP

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A view of the world coloured by fear of what the next century will bring

PARIS DAYS

John Lichfield

The man at the bus-stop started talking to me, something almost unheard of in Paris. I had Clare with me and he told me that he had a small daughter of his own. He had also lived abroad, confirming my wife's theory that the French (Parisians anyway) are much nicer when they have been subjected to foreign influences.

He was a specialist in tax avoidance who had lived in Britain, Africa and Washington. He spoke interestingly and pessimistically about the problems of the French economy. Times were hard but would get worse.

Since I had also lived in Washington, I asked whether he had enjoyed being there. "Ah, non, it was much too coloured for me," he said. Seeing my negative facial sign-language, he added: "In any case, it was too coloured for a French person."

The question arises: are the French racist? In the ideological sense of obsession with race and white supremacy, I think not, despite the Front National's rise. In the broader sense of cultural solipsism, even cultural intolerance, there is a case to answer. The French call it *nombrilisme* – preoccupation with one's own belly-button.

We have come across it ourselves. We have invited school-friends of Charlie's to come to the house, sending formal notes to the parents in the approved manner, and received no reply whatsoever. The parents who do respond have some kind of foreign experience or connection. They tell us the reaction of the other parents is typical. They have rigidly structured lives and an approved pattern of friends. They have no interest in making connections with foreigners.

> They have no interest in making connections with foreigners

Here is a seeming paradox. On one hand you have the overpowering self-satisfaction and self-confidence of the French. On the other, you have a nation gripped by a great crisis of confidence. The mood into which France has plunged in the past two years is composed of many things, but underlying it is a fear of the modern world, a fear that the French economy and French culture will be swamped in the techno-global world of the 21st century.

The paradox is no paradox but two sides of the same coin. France is more worried than other nations about loss of identity because it thinks it has more to lose. It will have to speak to foreigners; travel abroad. It fears bad culture drives out good. Put more pejoratively, France is anxious about having to measure its superiority against the rest of the world on a daily basis.

At its extreme, as propagated by the Front, this has become a conspiracy theory. France is the victim of a conspiracy by the forces of Anti-France, comprising the Jewish lobbies, Freemasons, homosexuals, the Trilateral Commission, the European Commission and Jean-Marie Le Pen's new bugbear, the US. They are plotting to abolish culture and identity and replace it with a lowest-common-denominator world culture.

At some rallies, this view is promoted in Orwellian cadences: *croques monsieur* good, hamburgers bad; Orangina good, Coca-Cola bad; berets good, baseball caps bad.

One should not laugh too loudly. This is a new and effective way of extending the FN's message beyond the purely racial to something more amorphously and powerfully cultural. It plays on legitimate anxieties but is based on a lie. The obsession, and it is not just a FN obsession, with a fragile, and threatened, French cultural purity is a distortion of history and a trap. The kind of stultifying inwardness it implies would be – already is – a bigger threat to French greatness than globalisation or illegal immigration.

France has always been strong enough to absorb influences from the world and be for ever French. France has much to offer the new global world. It will, arguably, also benefit from having its doors and windows opened wider and becoming less *nombriliste*.

This week I was in Toulon, a Front National-run town which has long had the reputation of being the most intolerant in France.

I was waiting, with some dread, for a Le Pen rally for fanatical *frontiste* pensioners.

I went to a café, which had check-clothed tables spilling into the sunshine. The *patron* and the one waiter were evidently, but not aggressively, homosexual. Other customers included an Arab family who were on first-name terms with the waiter, two old men from a Marcel Pagnol Provençal novel who kept falling asleep over their lunch, a table of yuppies who chatted among themselves and into their mobile phones, and a group of women in their 30s who joked vulgarly with the waiter and pinched his bottom. The experience, and the food, inoculated me with a sense of well-being before I entered the rally. Despite its cosmopolitan *joie de vivre*, the café was unmistakably and incorruptibly French.

Burning issue: Riots in Marseilles against the Front National, which has extended its message beyond race to include culture Photograph: Reuters

significant shorts

Angry German builders storm the Reichstag

Protesting builders stormed the Reichstag in Berlin, traditional and future home of Germany's parliament. Five policemen were injured and eight protesters arrested. Their union wants an end to "wage dumping" by cheaper workers from Britain, Portugal and East Europe, and resumption of "cold-weather payments", which offered a safety net to those laid off in winter. **Imre Karacs – Bonn**

Killer asks for death penalty

A Jewish man asked for the death penalty after being denied more time to explain how he was driven to kill his children because his ex-wife wanted to raise them as Christians. "My children cannot be Christians. I don't know if you can understand that," Avi Kostner said. He testified for four hours about his abusive childhood, his custody battle and his reasons for drugging and killing his children, Geri Beth, 12, and Ryan, 10.
AP – Hackensack, New Jersey

Dangerous profession

Twenty-seven journalists were killed in 1996, and 24 countries held a record 185 reporters in prison at the end of last year, the Committee to Protect Journalists said. Turkish prisons held more than a third of the 1996 total.
AP – Washington

Vietnamese smoke signal

Philip Morris Vietnam, a subsidiary of the US company, was fined a symbolic $2,700 (£1,680), and hundreds of its Marlboro posters, promotional lighters and cigarette cases were confiscated after it violated an advertising ban.
AP – Ho Chi Minh City

86 feared dead in plane crash

A military transport with 86 people on board crashed in a mountainous region of north-east Iran and there was no news of survivors, Iranian media said. **Reuters – Tehran**

End in sight for defector saga

Li Peng, China's Prime Minister, said a solution was in sight for Hwang Jang Yop, a North Korean defector holed up in the South Korean consulate. **AP – Peking**

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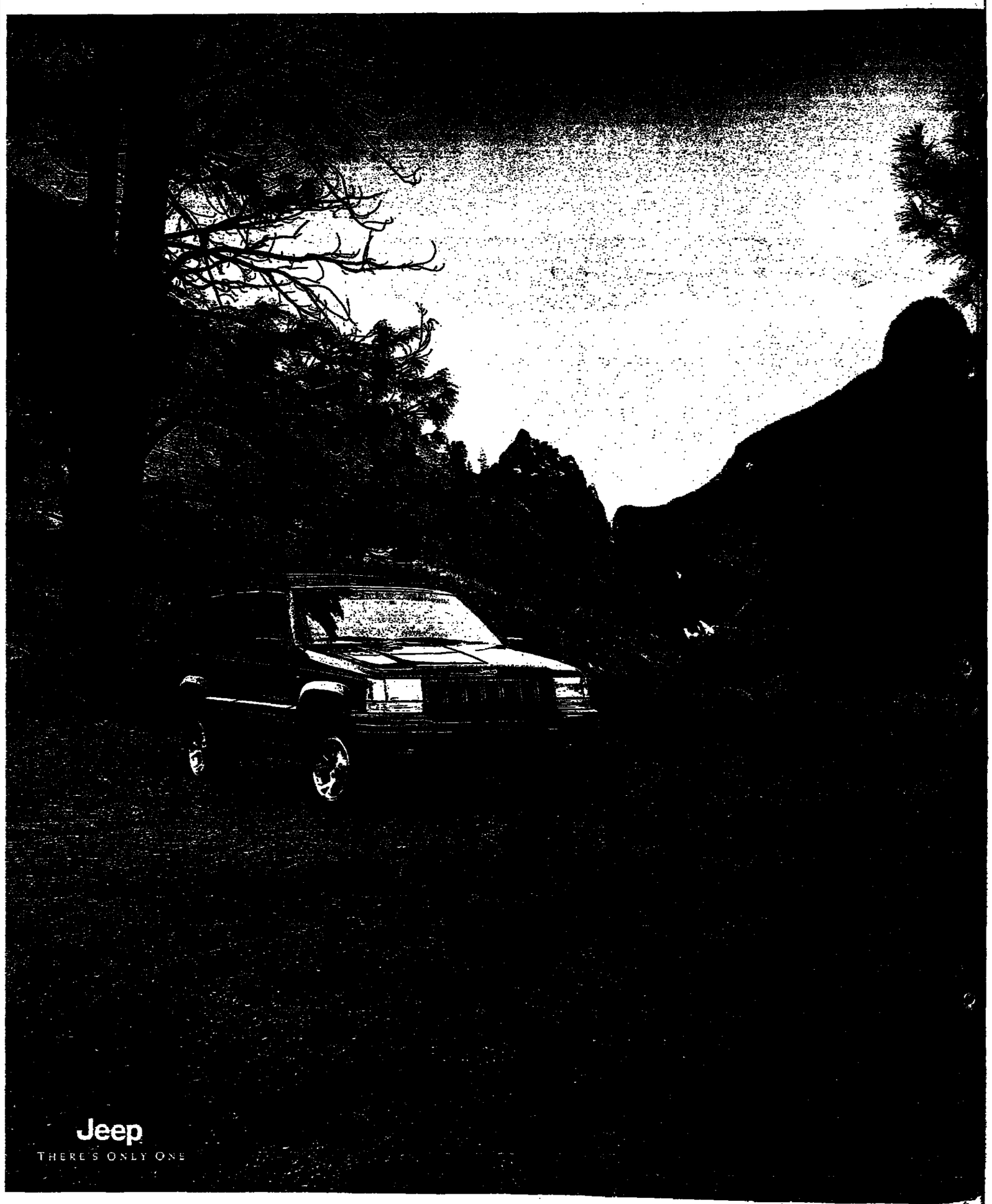

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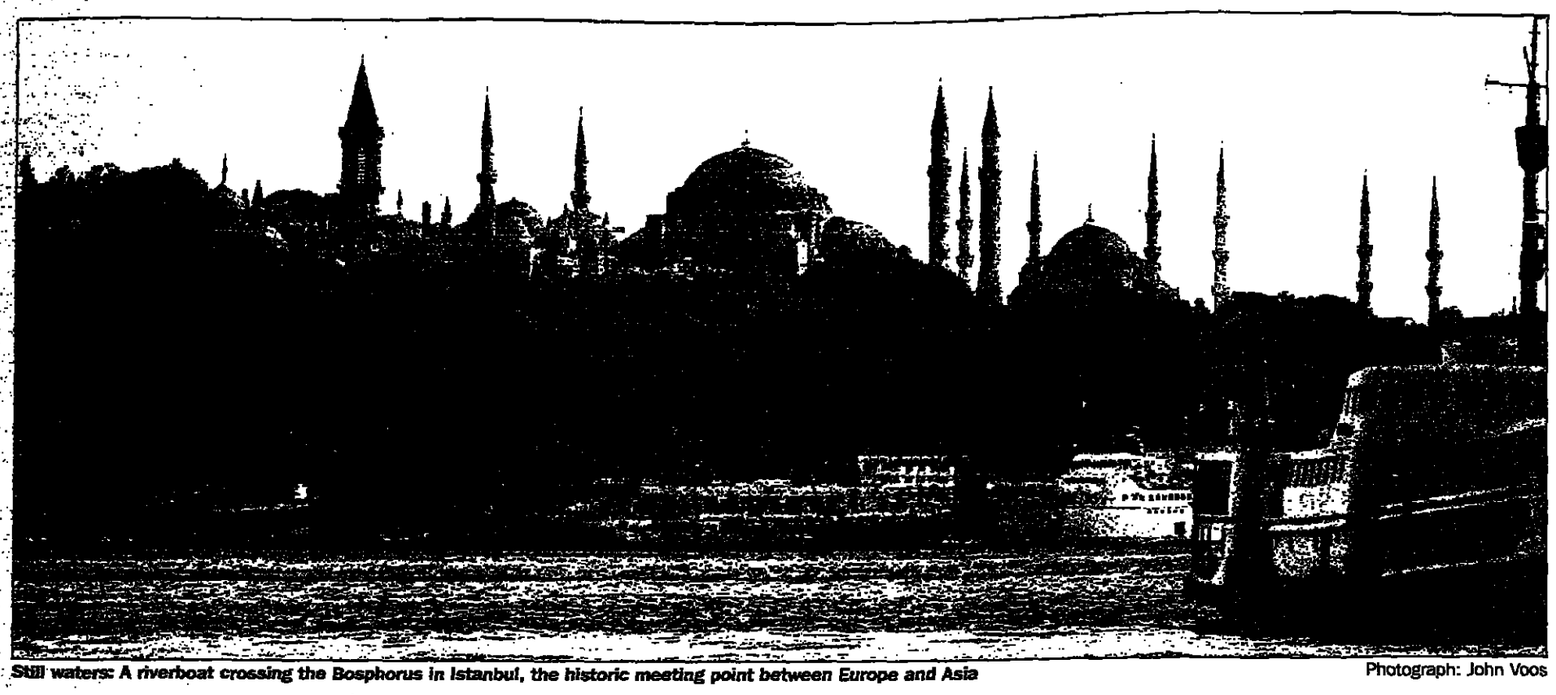
Turkey rocks EU boat in struggle to get on board



Still waters: A riverboat crossing the Bosphorus in Istanbul, the historic meeting point between Europe and Asia

Photograph: John Voos

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

A sharp downturn in the European Union's relations with Turkey is expected to figure prominently in discussions this weekend among the EU's 15 foreign ministers at the Dutch town of Apeldoorn. As Turkey presses its demands for inclusion in the EU, an open split has developed between those EU countries which say the Turks should never become members and others, including Britain and France, which reject so rigid a stance.

The disagreement has begun to affect EU relations with the United States. US ambassadors in Europe recently received instructions to warn EU governments that the US had "very strong views" on the desirability of keeping EU membership open to Turkey.

However, the view that Turkey's European identity should ultimately find expression in EU membership is clearly anathema in several continental capitals. Last week the leaders of Christian Democratic and centrist parties from Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain bluntly declared that Turkey should not be a candidate for joining the EU even in the long term.

France quickly dissociated itself from the declaration. "It is important for the stability of ... Europe that the Turks retain a European prospect, even if we know that membership would not be realistic in the short term," said France's European Affairs Minister, Michel Barnier.

That view is broadly shared in Britain, which does not agree with some EU countries that Turkey's Islamic faith and heritage should disbar it from membership. "There is a very serious worry in the EU about the way the relationship with Turkey has deteriorated in the last few months," one British official said. "But we say the main obstacle is not cultural or religious, it is the sheer financial and economic set of problems that early Turkish membership would cause. It is a very big country and very backward by EU standards."

Hence Britain distinguishes between Turkey, which it says should be treated as a member of the European family and an eventual contender for EU admission, and central and eastern European states such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. British support for EU membership for the latter countries is unqualified.

To accommodate Turkish aspirations, France is proposing a "European conference" that would bring together EU members with those states excluded from the formal accession negotiations expected to open next year. Turkey would be included in the "conference" group as proof of the EU's commitment not to leave it in the cold.

Whether this will be enough to appease the Turks is another matter. Tansu Ciller, the pro-Western Foreign Minister, said yesterday: "A formation in Europe excluding Turkey will be a loss for the region and threatening to peace."

Some continental EU officials say that Turkey would not have received its public slap in the face last week, if the Turks had not threatened to block Nato's enlargement by linking it to their own desire to join the EU. Like the US, EU governments oppose attempts to hold the enlargements of Nato and the EU hostage to each other.

However, other factors are at play. In Germany, which is home to almost 2 million Turks, the government would find it difficult to voice support for Turkish membership of the EU at a time when unemployment is at its highest level since 1933.

> Turkey is a very big country and very backward by EU standards

Moreover, many EU governments believe that they would have fewer problems with Turkey if it were not for the attitude of Greece. Turkey concluded a customs union with the EU in late 1995, but Greece has persisted in blocking funds for Turkey that were supposed to flow from the agreement. At Apeldoorn, the majority of EU states are likely to urge Greece to show more open-mindedness, but few think a breakthrough is in store.

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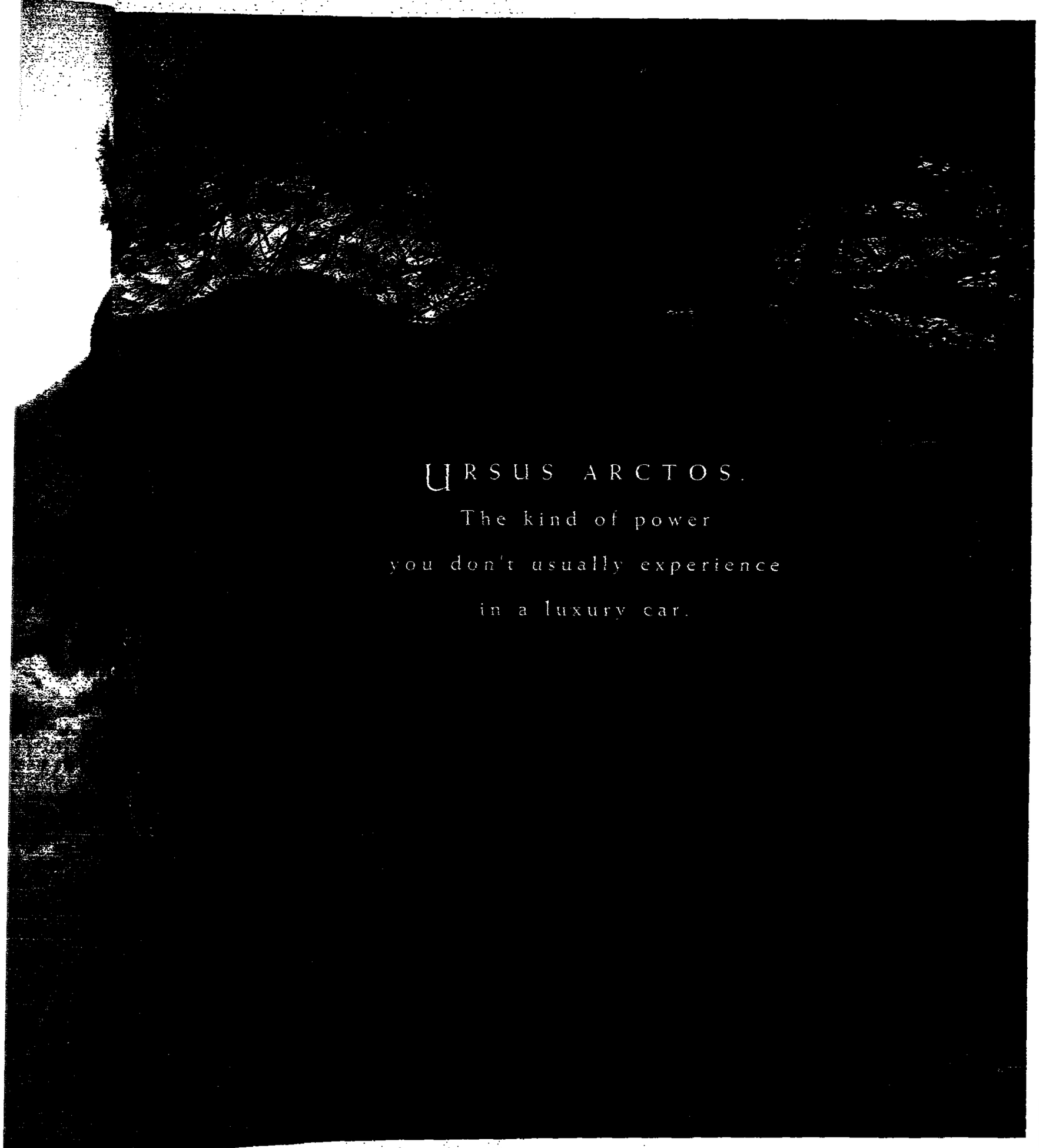

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US dismayed by threat to Nato's growth

Christopher de Bellaigue
Ankara

"We very respectfully submit to our European friends that they must strategically think of Turkey as a European country and not send negative signals to Turkey."

Last Tuesday, a State Department statement affirmed US support for Turkey's efforts to join the European Union. Unfortunately for Turkish Europhiles, friendly Nicholas Burns, who delivered the message, speaks for a nation with no clout in Brussels and no seats in Strasbourg.

The United States is unhappy with the way things are going for Turkey in Europe. Washington dislikes the shallow philosophising of EU members who want the Turks to keep their distance. "Cultural differences", is how Jean-Claud Juncker, Luxembourg's Prime Minister, put it. Other Europeans speak of a "civilisation" in which Turkey has no place.

Such talk has united Europhile and Islamist Turks to decry the Europeans. It has also galvanised US officials into interceding on Turkey's behalf, earning accusations of meddling. Why should the US upset friends within the EU, and a Greek-American lobby of 4 million, for a hopeless cause?

The simplest reason is gratitude. For almost half a century, Turkey has made sacrifices in the name of American ideals. More than 700 Turks lost their lives in the Korean war. The Turks then provided Nato, which was more pragmatic about "cultural differences", with a vital first line of defence against the Soviet Union.

During the Gulf War, the Turks aroused Arab anger when US jets bombed Iraq from Turkey. Even now, Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's Islamic Prime Minister, allows the US Air Force to patrol Northern Iraq from a Turkish base.

But American gratitude is not all that arouses support for Turkey's European aspirations. The US, despite protestations, appears to have accepted the practical existence of a link between Nato and the EU.

The EU says this link does not exist. It was raised by the Turks themselves, who threatened to scupper Nato enlargement unless they got good news on Europe. The Americans then delivered a threat of their own: according to one US official, the Turks face "a major collision," should they veto the Alliance's enlargement. On the other hand, the Turks now have the US lobbying on their behalf.

A satisfactory response from the EU is far from guaranteed. Europe and the US look at Turkey in different ways. The US has a strategic interest in Turkey, because it borders the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Middle East.

Washington's mediation does not mean all is well between the Americans and the Turks. One source of worry is Mr Erbakan's Welfare Party, whose members incline to Teheran. Last year, Mr Erbakan signed a £23bn natural gas deal with Iran.

The ties of friendship have also been tested by the Greek lobby in the US, which has blocked big arms sales to Turkey. The Americans have also begun toughening up their attitude towards human rights, now the Soviet divisions are no longer on the Turkish border.

In the short term, however, the Americans want Turkey's blessing for Nato's enlargement. The EU wants the same thing, though European sympathy for US methods may be less forthcoming.

obituaries / gazette

Professor L. C. Knights

F. R. Leavis and his wife are rightly thought of as the standard-bearers of *Scrutiny*, but it was L. C. Knights and a few friends who had the idea of creating such a literary quarterly, and took steps to bring it into being on 15 May 1932 – Knights's 26th birthday.

Knights was the only one of *Scrutiny*'s editors who served in that role for every one of its 76 issues. For some time he had been only a nominal editor and he only learnt from a third person in 1953 of the decision to abandon publication. "I was hurt," he wrote later, "by this failure of communication."

I first met Lionel Knights when I was a sixth-former at Gresham's School in Norfolk. He was visiting his close friend, and co-editor of *Scrutiny*, Denys Thompson, who taught me English literature. Thompson invited me to join them for a walk over the sands at Wells, and I remember little of their conversation except that Knights managed to cap every one of our remarks with an appropriate quotation from Shakespeare, whose plays he apparently knew by heart. I found him a rather perplexing mixture of the severe and merry; but felt pleased with myself for choosing his recent pamphlet *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?* (1933) as my school prize for literature.

Meeting him frequently over the subsequent years corrected both these first impressions. The apparent severity – a product of a high brow and rimless spectacles – was really a moral integrity which partially masked what Leavis described as an Eliot-like Christian gentleness: and his Elizabethan learning was accompanied by an excessive modesty which led him to conclude his Lady Macbeth pamphlet by insisting that he had "no illusions about the adequacy of [my] remarks as criticism: they are merely pointers". In the event his dismissal of the Bradleyan notion that Shakespeare was pre-eminently a creator of "living characters" and his insistence that the plays must be considered as dramatic poems became a central tenet of the *Scrutiny* movement.

Knights followed up *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?* with his celebrated book, which earned him his PhD, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1937). His Cambridge colleague the distinguished Elizabethan scholar Leo Salingar has described this as one of the first studies to relate the themes and quality of an author's style to the nature and traditions of his society. After the Jonson book came a stream of essays and books on 17th-century literature, including three volumes of what he typically called "explorations" (*Explorations*, 1946, *Further Explorations*, 1965, and *Explorations 3*, 1976) – in his later writings he often seems to be exploring what lies beneath a writer's skin. But it is revealing that his earliest as well as many of his later essays in *Scrutiny* were on educational themes, notably his "scrutinies" of modern universities, of training colleges and of examinations.

Knights: explorations

For Knights was a devoted teacher who flourished both in the lecture hall and in the intimacy of the seminar room. And he had the daunting vision of the central tasks facing a university and its teachers as being to cultivate four qualities: "A sensitive and flexible intelligence that can be brought to bear effectively upon the problems . . . of society"; "A potentially mature sense of values"; "A sense of the relativity of one's immediate standards"; and "An ability to use with precision the instruments of knowledge in some field of human effort". If such an ideal seems remote from today's educational world, it offers a good description of the education which Knights set out to offer his own students.

Ironically most of his teaching was carried out at the universities of Manchester, Sheffield and Bristol (in the latter two as Professor), and not at Cambridge where he had originally studied. When he first went as an undergraduate to Cambridge from his home in Grantham, he was apparently entranced by the cultural charm of life in the city. But his eight years at Cambridge as King Edward VII Professor of English Literature from 1965 to 1973 were to prove the least happy of all his teaching career. In a lecture, "Cambridge Criticism: what is it?", he said that the approach of the School of English "was concerned for the quality of life of individuals and therefore for the quality of the civilisation that shaped them and for which they were responsible". But it is doubtful if the faculty as he found it was fully articulating those ideas.

Moreover he discovered that, though a professor, he was not, for much of his time, Chairman of the Faculty Board and thus lacked the authority he had enjoyed at the provincial universities. Indeed, confronted by a faculty whose members wielded most of their power in their own colleges' fastnesses and who enjoyed no corporate life in the faculty, Knights felt frustrated and anxious, and he believed that he had managed to achieve very little to ensure "the smooth working of everyday *teaching* – the arrangement and revitalising of undergraduate courses, choice of set books, and so on".

Of course Knights exaggerated his lack of success at Cambridge, and he was not able to appreciate the subtle influence which he exerted as a profoundly civilised being. He was particularly glad that he managed to establish a joint Faculty-Student Committee which was not without influence.

But perhaps his most serious disappointment at Cambridge was his estrangement from the Leavises. At the end of his life he wrote that "Leavis was the most important intellectual influence of my life in young adulthood: without his influence a large part of me might have remained dormant." And he became a close friend of the Leavis family. But on his return to Cambridge he found himself being addressed by Leavis as "Professor Judas", and he gathered that Leavis believed "that he had in some way betrayed him and all he stood for". The specific charges were untrue, and Knights "was of course deeply hurt".

None the less, whatever the rights and wrongs of this matter, Knights was wonderfully forbearing. And when, in his later years, he lost much of his sight, he looked most stoically after his ailing wife Elizabeth, who survives him. But then, he was just such a person.

Boris Ford

Lionel Knights came to Bristol in 1953 from Sheffield, where William Empson succeeded him as Professor of English, **writes Professor Henry Gifford**. His association with *Scrutiny* made him in prospect a somewhat daunting figure.

However it did not take him very long to allay the anxieties of a department comfortable with itself, and having a potentially strong medieval and language side. That he overcame the prejudice of those who expected him to uproot Anglo-Saxon was largely due to his own patience and respect for those who differed from him, and to his regard for Susie Tucker, an upholder of Old English and Old Norse and a notable student of the English language. She was to become a good friend of Elizabeth, Lionel and their children.

When some 12 years later he was about to move on to Cambridge and had just finished the book *Further Explorations*, he dedicated it to his colleagues in the English department. A more balanced and flexible course had been achieved, and he was leaving them with high morale and some confidence in the future.

A professor, in Knights's view, should lead his department with authority tempered by gentle persuasion. His range of interests was wide, and the relation between literature and politics an abiding concern. He gave an example of critical thinking humane and sensitive, and by no means restricted. Like F. R. Leavis to whom he had owed much, Knights believed that English should stand at the very centre of an arts faculty. With his encouragement it developed new courses, such as in English with Classics, and English with Russian, a new subject nurtured at the beginning within the English department.

Knights was a gifted lecturer. Many of his essays in the three volumes of his *Explorations* had begun as lectures. This was a form that suited him very well. He had a finely controlled histrionic streak, reading Shakespeare's verse with animation and a delicate sense of rhythm. His conviction about the value of great literature appealed to his students. Like his close friend D. W. Harding he had a sensibility that was attracted by a religious way of life, although when his wife Elizabeth became a Christian he somewhat painfully remained outside the Church. Coleridge was always important to him, and Blake. His essay on George Herbert, with its blend of intimacy and a sense of exclusion, was what Eliot turned to before writing himself on the poet.

Knights has written about the significance for him of a boyhood in Grantham at the turn of the century. In that old-fashioned place he became "immersed in social problems" with those "nice distinctions of rank" belonging to *Middlemarch*. The escape from Grantham was, however, not without a backward and appreciative look. The world he lived to see produced a cultural shock so profound that it alerted him to the danger of "the cruel, the self-seeking and the unimaginative having a large share of control".

Those who knew Lionel Knights in his rewarding years at Bristol will remember with gratitude a humane scholar in a tradition that must not be allowed to die.

Lionel Charles Knights, teacher and critic: born 15 May 1906; Lecturer in English Literature, Manchester University 1933-34, 1935-47; Professor of English Literature, Sheffield University 1947-52; Winterstoke Professor of English, Bristol University 1953-64; King Edward VII Professor of English Literature, Cambridge University 1965-73 (Emeritus); Fellow, Queens' College, Cambridge 1965-73; married 1936 Elizabeth Barnes (one son, one daughter); died Durham 8 March 1997.

Colourful: Fraser in *Too Late the Hero*, 1969 Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Ronald Fraser

The pompous, blustering tones of Ronald Fraser brought to television and films for 40 years an actor invariably cast as an upper-class gent, not of the David Niven variety, but often prone to seediness and self-deprecation.

He was best known on television for his Seventies sitcom roles as the rumbustious old colonial "Badger" Allenby-Johnson, arriving back in Britain and confronting the permissive society, in *The Misfit* and a wacky police inspector in *Spooner's Patch*. He was also known as a man about town in the Sixties, often to be found in London's pubs and nightspots.

Born in Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, in 1930, the son of a Scottish builder and interior decorator, Fraser caught the acting bug while performing in Terence Rattigan's *French Without Tears* in Benghazi, North Africa, during National Service with the Seaforth Highlanders. He subsequently trained at RADA and, on leaving in 1953, became a dresser to the legendary actor-manager Sir Donald Wolfit at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, before gaining more acting experience at the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow. Fraser made his London stage début in *The Good Sailor* and joined the Old Vic Company in 1954.

His many West End performances included roles in *The Long and the Short and the Tall*, *The Ginger Man*, *The Singular Man*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*, *Purple Dust*, *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *High Society*. He also appeared on Broadway in *La Grosse Valise* and played Falstaff in a production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park.

In almost 50 film roles, Fraser acted alongside such greats as Robert Mitchum, Deborah Kerr, Norman Wisdom, Laurence Harvey, David Niven, Harry Andrews, Richard Todd, Maurice Chevalier, Tony Hancock, Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, James Stewart, Peter Finch and Ralph Richardson. The films included *Black Ice* (his début, 1957), *The Sundowners* (1960), *There Was a Crooked Man* (1960), *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1960), *The Punch and Judy Man* (1962), *The Flight of the Phoenix* (1965), *The Killing of Sister George* (1968), the surrealistic comedy *The Bed Sitting Room* (1969), the satirical, Monty Python-style *The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer* (1970) and the beautifully made family drama *Swallows and Amazons* (1974, based on Arthur Ransome's novel).

But, as the British film industry went into its bleak years of production in the Seventies, Fraser was increasingly seen in pictures such as the comedies *Rentadick* (1971) and *Ooh, You Are Awful* (1972) and exploitation films such as *Percy's Progress* (1974) and *Come Play with Me* (1977). Roles on the big screen appeared to improve with his appearance in *The Wild Geese* (1978), although *Trail of the Pink Panther* (1982) was disappointing, as was director Julien Temple's musical *Absolute Beginners* (1986).

Fraser experienced a revival in *Scandal* (1988), playing Justice Marshall – who tried Stephen Ward for living off the immoral earnings of prostitution in the Profumo affair of the Sixties – *Let Him Have It* (1991) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1993). He was due to play an aristocratic Marxist taxi-driver, driving a Rolls-Royce, in the forthcoming feature film *I Love You Love Me Love*, to be directed by James Cellan-Jones.

On television, Fraser made his name as Basil "Badger" Allenby-Johnson, a rubber planter returning from Malaya to find a very different England from the one he had left, in two series of Roy Clarke's *The Misfit* (1970-71). Complete with Panama hat and clinging on to Edwardian standards, "Badger" was shocked by the society around him – and the casual behaviour of his son Ted (played by Simon Ward). He was even more shocked when he had to travel north in a vain search for employment.

Fraser returned to sitcom in 1979 as the manic Inspector Spooner in the first series of Ray Galton and Johnny Speight's spoof police series *Spooner's Patch*. Set in Woodley police station, the stories involved corruption and skits of other television policemen. However, Fraser did not continue in the role when the programme returned for two more series and was replaced by Donald Churchill.

His dozens of character roles on television have included appearances in *Pennies from Heaven* (1978), *Brideshead Revisited* (1981), *Fortunes of War* (1987), *Taggart: Violent Delights* (1992), *The Blackheath Poisonings* (1992), *Class Act* (1994, as a judge, alongside Joanna Lumley) and P.G. Wodehouse's *Heavy Weather* (1995, as Sir Gregory Parsloe).

One of Fraser's last television appearances was as the drunken judge Sir Richard Gregory in *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders*, Andrew Davies's 1996 adaptation of Daniel Defoe's classic novel. Davies created the role to give Moll the reprieve that saves her from the gallows and allows her to be transported to Virginia instead. The worse for drink, Sir Richard leaves a tavern with Moll (Alex Kingston) and has sex with her in his carriage, leaving him open to blackmail and being forced to give her a pardon.

Fraser, a colourful character, admitted to a fondness for alcohol and explained away several drink-driving convictions as resulting from "a little revelry on the roads of our kingdom".

Anthony Hayward

Ronald Gordon Fraser, actor: born Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire 11 April 1930; married 1956 Elizabeth Howe (two daughters; marriage dissolved 1964); died London 13 March 1997.

Albert Gazier

The welfare state being everywhere under attack, it is sadly symbolic that one of the founders of the French *état providence* should have died. Albert Gazier was 88. All his life a socialist and a trade unionist, on several occasions he held ministerial office under the Fourth Republic.

Born in Valenciennes the son of schoolteachers, he was rendered poor by the death of his father in 1916. He started work as an errand boy and continued to have clerical jobs, though he graduated in Law. As a member of the left-wing trade union the Confédération Generale du Travail (CGT), he began to assume positions of responsibility.

With the coming of the Popular Front he was one of those who organised the strikes and occupations of the large departmental stores in Paris in June 1936. The hauling down of the yellow flag of the Samaritaine and its replacement by the flag of the CGT was one of the great moments of the social explosion that greeted the victory of Léon Blum. But Gazier was always prudent, apprehensive of a Communist take-over, someone who sought negotiation.

Having volunteered for the army in 1939, in 1940 he became one of the leaders of trade-union opposition to the Vichy government. From December 1940 he was one of Christian Pineau's lieutenants in the movement of Libération-Nord. He escaped from the Gestapo in 1942, and having taken refuge in the Jura, he spent some time in London during 1943, and was appointed to the Consultative Assembly that met in Algiers. After the Liberation, he was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly.

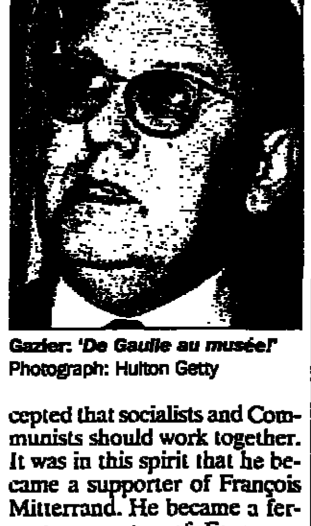
In all these places his strategy was to oppose any possible Communist domination. Sometimes this made him violent, as he demanded more rigorous punishment for collaborators at the Liberation, so that the Communists would not have the monopoly of revenge. Sometimes and more naturally, he urged a consensus between liberals and socialists, in 1945 proposing that the state should play a moderate role in economic and social matters.

But he was also opposed to a Gaullist dictatorship. In June 1944 he had proposed, on behalf of the CGT, that de Gaulle should assume the title of Head of the Provisional Government. This gave great offence to the General, who did not wish to owe his position to trade unionists. In December 1945 Gazier was one of two socialists who proposed a reduction of military credits. He explained that he only wanted to defend the rights of the Assembly and to influence the government. This was too much for de Gaulle, who resigned in January 1946, disgusted at seeing the renewed power of political parties.

Gazier served in several governments in the years that followed, but his most important experience was as Minister for Social Affairs, in the longest government of the Fourth Republic, that of Guy Mollet, from February 1956 to May 1957. It was said that this government had two policies: that personified by Robert Lacoste in Algiers, who represented the continuation of the war, and that personified by Gazier, who stood for social reform. He introduced a third week of holidays with pay; he created a tax on motor-cars which funded a pension scheme for the old; he negotiated an agreement with the medical unions whereby the whole of medical costs would be refunded by social security; and he introduced important housing reforms.

These measures were popular with many, but they aroused alarm because of their cost. However, Gazier was soon involved in more dramatic controversy. He vigorously opposed the return of de Gaulle to power in 1958 because of his opposition to dictatorship and because he believed that there was a secret agreement between de Gaulle and Moscow. He was Minister for Information in the government of Pierre Pflimlin, and as minister he led the march of some 200,000 protesters across Paris on 28 May, "*la defense républicaine*" demonstrating against de Gaulle, and shouting the slogan "*De Gaulle au musée!*"

His opposition to de Gaulle cost him his seat in parliament: he had been deputy for the Seine since October 1945. It also caused him to break with his old associate Guy Mollet. In his desire to renovate the Socialist Party, and in his conviction that the purpose of Gaullism was to save capitalism, he accepted that socialists and Communists should work together. It was in this spirit that he became a supporter of François Mitterrand. He became a fervent supporter of European unity and occupied many distinguished but largely honorific posts during the Mitterrand presidency.



Gazier: 'De Gaulle au musée!'
Photograph: Hulton Getty

Douglas Johnson

Albert Gazier, politician and trade unionist: born Valenciennes, France 16 May 1908; Minister for Public Works 1946; Secretary of State to the Président du Conseil 1947; Minister for Information 1950-51, 1958; Minister for Social Affairs 1956-57; married; died Vanves 2 March 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

CANG: Anna Bela. On 12 March 1997, at Dolgellau Hospital, North Wales, aged 91. Daughter of Dr Jacob and Emilia Cynberg of Lublin, sister of Dora and Stefanie, sister-in-law of Josef Lipianski and of Dr Wladislaw Ney, widow of Joel Cang, truly loved mother of Stephen, mother-in-law of Jennifer, grandmother of Matthew, Joseph and Gilbert. Cremation, 3.45pm, Wednesday 19 March, at Golders Green.

IN MEMORIAM

MENDEZ: Joan P., 16 March. Lots of love, David F.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Princess Royal, Patron, Scottish Rugby Union, attends the France v Scotland International Match at Parc de Princes, Paris.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; 1st Battalion the Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Irish Guards.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr J. J. Hale and Miss A. L. Heys

The engagement is announced between John Justin, son of Professor Sir John and Lady Hale, of Twickenham, Middlesex, and Amanda Louise, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Basil Heys, of East Molesey, Surrey.

Mr S. A. Wajed FRCS and Dr R. Batty

The engagement is announced between Shahjehan (Saj), elder son of Dr and Mrs M. Wajed, of St Albans, Hertfordshire, and Rachel, youngest daughter of the Rev and Mrs J. Batty, of Goole, East Humberside. The wedding will take place in September 1997.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr David Alton MP, 47; Mr Alexander Bernstein, former chairman, Granada Group, 62; Dr David Bryer, director, Oxfam, 53; Miss Isobel Buchanan, soprano, 43; Mr James Butler, former senior partner, KPMG Peat Marwick, 68; Sir Jack Callard, former chairman, British Home Stores, 84; Sir Robert Carnwath, High Court judge, 52; Lord Constantine of Stanmore, former company chairman, 87; Mr Ry Cooder, folk and blues guitarist, 51; Mr Frank Dobson MP, 57; Professor Sir James Dunbar-Nasmith, architect, 70; Mr John Duttine, actor, 49; The Right Rev John Gibbs, former Bishop of Coventry, 80; Professor John Gillingham, neurosurgeon, 81; Earl Haig, painter, 79; Sir Leonard Knowles, former Chief Justice of the Bahamas, 81; Mr Mike Love, vocalist, 53; Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo, former chief executive, British Aerospace, 73; Mr Keith McCarter, sculptor, 61; Professor Joan Mitchell, political economist, 77; Mr Michael Moore, chairman, Quicks Group, 61; Mr Robert Nye, novelist and poet, 58; Mr Ben Okri, writer, 38; Sir Philip Powell, architect, 76; The Right Rev Michael Scott-Joynt, Bishop of Winchester, 54; Sir Roger Tomkys, Master, Pembroke College, Cambridge, 60; Mr David Wall, former Director, Royal Academy of Dancing, 51.

TOMORROW: Mr Ben Aris, actor, 60; Mr Mathew Bannister, Controller, BBC Radio 1, and managing director, Network Radio BBC, 40; Miss Sybille Bedford, author, 86; Miss Teresa Berganza, mezzo-soprano, 62; Mr Bernardo Bertolucci, film director, 56; The Right Rev Hugo de Waal, Bishop of Thetford, 62; Sir John Drinkwater QC, a Commissioner of Income Tax, 72; Sir Philip Foreman, former chairman, Short Bros, 74; Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Foxley-Norris, Chairman Emeritus, Cheshire Foundation, 80; Mr Ramon Hnatyshyn, former Governor-General of Canada, 63; Sir Ewart Jones, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, Oxford University, 86; Sir Anthony Kenny, Warden, Rhodes House, 66; Mr Jerry Lewis, comedian, 71; Mr Leo McKern, actor, 77; Miss Kate Nelligan, actress, 46; Mr Roger Norrington, conductor, 63; Mr Richard Puttick, former chairman, Taylor Woodrow, 81; Miss Bridget Rowe, Editor, the *Sunday Mirror*, 47.

Creation and procreation: we tread on holy ground

faith & reason

The possibility of human cloning shows that shared moral values are not enough. Society needs to recover a sense of 'the good', argues Cardinal Basil Hume.

One of the most striking facts about our society today is the apparent loss of hope. There is a pessimism which pervades much of our cultural life, reflecting a profound disenchantment of the human spirit, and an absence of faith in the possibility of transformation and redemption. We have stopped relying on God, but find humanity to be wanting.

"The great tragedy of modern civilisation is to be found in the failure of material progress to satisfy human needs," wrote Christopher Dawson in 1939 as the Nazi threat was beginning to take shape in Germany. The world, he said, needed to recover a "spiritual vitality". Nearly 70 years later that need is even more urgent.

For many today something only exists if it can be immediately known and verified by the five senses. What cannot be examined under a microscope or observed through a telescope, does not exist. There is no such thing as the spiritual: the non-material has no existence, it is said.

There is, I suspect, a general consensus over what are the basic moral values: values such as kindness, honesty, faithfulness in relationships, respect for others, for the environment, for justice and for law. Recently the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority found an extensive agreement between people of different faiths and no faith, across social groups, on a range of moral values. But to the question "What is the good?", which addresses the source and authority of those values, it is common today is to assert that there is no true answer: morality is a matter of opinion.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition the Ten Commandments, as the revelation of God, offer objective moral norms. They set out a framework of morality which not only defines our obligations to others, but at a deep level resonates with what we know to be required for human well-being and life in community. Far from being arbitrary external requirements of one tradition, they offer all peoples insights into the true nature of humanity. They disclose the fundamental duties, and therefore, indirectly, the inalienable rights of the human person. They apply to all of us because we share a common humanity. Indeed, it is from a deeper appreciation of our common humanity that we can more readily consider the ways we should behave towards each other.

Three consequences stand out. First, we need to respect and protect human life itself, from conception to its natural end. Secondly, our shared humanity requires us to acknowledge the rights of all to what is needed to live a fully human life – including food, clothing, shelter, education and employment. Thirdly, we have to recognise that we owe certain duties to others.

Yet our society has become, in some respects, morally desensitised, and is therefore ill-prepared to grapple with a looming issue which I have no doubt is fast becoming one of the major moral problems of our age, namely the implications of breathtaking developments in genetics and biotechnology. I heard last week of a distinguished scientist imagining, apparently with complete equanimity, a future in which children were the product of three different sets of parents: biological parents, gestational parents, and a third set who were bringing them up. If we separate these three relationships then we in some way undermine something which is specifically human.

There are undoubted benefits which gene therapy might bring. I do fear for the future, however, if the language of bodily human love is gradually replaced by an artificial process, if procreation becomes production, or even reproduction, and if the individual human being becomes valued as a product to be ordered rather than a gift to be received.

Our human nature is delicate and fragile. There are boundaries which we cannot cross without fundamentally altering the way we relate to others, and see ourselves. Furthermore, we have no experience of the potential lifelong consequences which could follow from bringing human life into the world in new artificial ways. We must act with extreme caution, for bringing new life into the world is the nearest human beings come to creation. We tread on holy ground.

Our society badly needs to recover a deeper knowledge of what it means to be human. Without more people who are fully alive, seized of their duties to others, committed to building a better world, the outlook for our society is bleak. This is why spiritual vitality is so urgent, and why schools should be committed to the cultivation of goodness before success.

• *'Faith & Reason' is edited by Paul Vallely*

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THE INDEPENDENT
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End of the road for the Tory camp followers

That was the week, that was, that the ruling class threw in the towel. No, not in Albania. In Westminster, the City, the Home Counties and beyond. It took a few days for the import of the Wirral South by-election to sink in, but now the Tory power élite has given up.

We record the visible signs on our news pages today. Edwina Currie talking yesterday of the "formation of columns and lines and factions and groups" in the leadership election which she wants to see as quickly as possible after defeat. The Tory columnists Matthew Parris and Boris Johnson writing about the certainty of defeat in *The Times* and *The Telegraph*. But there is a less visible change happening, which is difficult for daily or even weekly newspapers to record. It is the intangible shift of power from one community of government to another. This is the week to stand back, observe and wonder.

A community of government is a large body: much broader than simply ministers or MPs. There is a *hinterland* of influence-brokers around a government, irrigated by the flow of power. And beyond them, a whole social stratum which draws sustenance from the same source. For the middle classes of the Home Counties, bound together by complex, overlapping subgroups of company directors, financial traders, quango members, this has been "their" government. For 18 years, the public debate that mattered took place between rival sub-groups of this élite: between, for example, bicycling, tweed-jacketed *Spectator* fogeys and brash, pointy-lapelled Thatcherite businessmen.

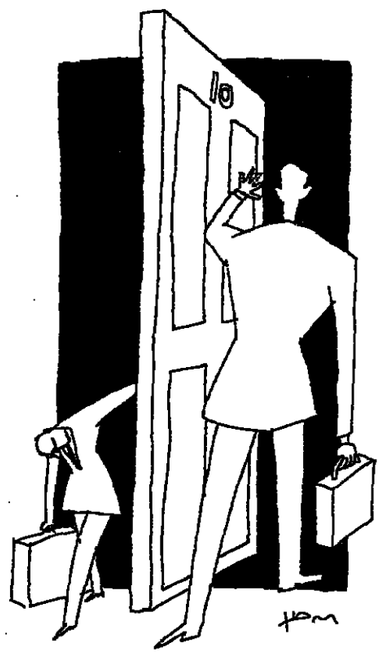
For some time, power has been ebbing away from the Tory élite, but it is only this week that the tap was finally turned off. Suddenly, the Tory commentators find themselves on the outside, on the fringes of power. When they drink with Tory MPs, they are no longer drinking at the well of power. This week, they have started to realise that they no longer know what is going on. The people who will make the running are no longer their friends. They do not know the people who matter.

The cynic may be prompted to ask: so what? Has Tony Blair's success not been to build bridges to precisely those social groups that sustained the Tories in power? The whole point about the coming election, surely, is that nothing is going to change.

But this is a fundamental misreading of the nature of political change. If Mr Blair wins, the personnel of the power élite will change completely. It is hard to over-estimate the impact, if he really does win, that this will have.

As the Chancellor put it yesterday: "There is no option marked 'Tory Policies, Labour Men'." The new power élite is made up of Labour Men and Labour Women, and although they may start by accepting many Tory Policies, they will operate them on Labour Assumptions.

In part, this is a generational shift: the new élite will be younger, it will speak a different language, it will care about different things. For example, the new guard will not give a moment's thought to fogeyish Tory reservations about constitutional change. For them, the only objections to reform are the practical ones of rival priorities, rival models of democracy and arguments of efficiency. For another example, imagine the pressures on Gordon Brown as he draws up his first full Budget. Of course, much of his room for manoeuvre would be constrained by the same factors that would limit Kenneth Clarke – which the shadow Chancellor has explicitly acknowledged by accepting in advance some of the key Tory tax-and-spend figures. But there will be a host of other decisions to be taken, many of which could be or become just as important as the top rate of income tax. It is possible – to put it no higher – that the networks surrounding Mr Brown will instinctively take a different view of green taxes, equality (a word that might cease sounding old-fashioned) and welfare dependency.



Much of this is difficult to predict in advance. Margaret Thatcher did not know in 1979 what Thatcherism would be like. The feel of Conservatism has changed several times over the past 18 years. It was fought over by economic liberals and social authoritarians, moulded by the practical need to sell off state assets, and twisted by the gravitational pull of European integration. It is probable that not even Mr Blair knows in 1997 what Blairism will be like. Its meaning will be contested both within new Labour and between new Labour and old. Many of the Labour power élite are northern, even Scottish. Many come from trade-union and left-wing backgrounds, even if they hold modernised views. They are likely to clash with the new power brokers moving in towards the centre of power in the business world.

Some of this change could mean the replacement of one clique of cronies and courtiers by another. This newspaper drew attention this week to the empire-building tendencies of the shadow Chancellor, which are ominous for a Blair administration. We have also been sceptical about Mr Blair's relations with some multinational corporations, such as NewsCorp and BT. The character of the new groups to which power shifts will, in the end, depend on the character of Mr Blair.

On balance, this change is likely to turn out to be refreshing. The renewal that is possible if the rivers of power flow into fresh channels should confound the cynics who fear that the election will change nothing. The election may still be a month and a half away, but this week saw the beginning of a big change in the culture and character of British politics. Suddenly, Conservative camp followers are finding out what life is like when you are no longer inside the tent – plainly a humbling experience, particularly for those who have never known any different. But at least we know it will be good for them.

▪ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ▪

Lilley's funded pensions still lay a burden on the future

Sir: It is claimed on behalf of Peter Lilley's proposals for pension reform, (report, 6 March) that they offer the next generation "genuine security through a real fund for its pensions".

There is plenty of historical evidence that the advance funding of pensions does not invariably provide greater security than "pay-as-you-go" financing (this year's contributions being used to pay this year's benefits). One of the arguments advanced in favour of the French system of *repartition*, a collective system of occupational pension provision financed on pay-as-you-go principles, is the greater security it affords by spreading the risk over the whole of society and over the generations.

In France in the 1930s there was a system of funded private pensions. It was destroyed in the 1940s by the military occupation and the severe inflation which followed it. The government had to introduce a system of levies on the working population to rescue the elderly whose retirement savings had vanished.

I presume that it is just because there is a lack of total faith in the long-term security of funded pensions that Peter Lilley's proposals provide for a guarantee by the state.

It is also often claimed that the "personalised" funding of pensions increases real investment, enabling pensions to be paid without cost to future generations of workers. These claims overlook the point that over-reliance on saving for retirement could result in investments that exceed prudent investment market opportunities. A reasonable balance should always be maintained between "capitalisation" and "pay-as-you-go" in order to obtain a broad spread of risk.

In any event, it is hard to see how "personalisation" of retirement savings can secure the provision of pensions without cost to other workers or taxpayers. All pensions are a transfer of resources from one part of the population to another. Any saving for retirement, (public or private, unfunded or funded) entails a claim on the goods and services produced by future generations of workers whether the claim is met through taxation, dividends or disinvestment.

Few would disagree with the notion that all economically active people should be encouraged to spread their own wealth from employment more evenly over their life by investing part of it, as long-term savings, in either employer-sponsored pension plans or personal retirement accounts. Few also, I suspect, would disagree with the principle that the state, as agent of the entire community, is the appropriate source of all social protection, including basic retirement income.

TONY SALTER
Richmond, Surrey

Sir: The "burden" of pensions on the taxpayer is a myth that needs exploding.

Pensions, benefits and wages all derive from the gross national product, which is growing at around 3 per cent a year while the workforce gets steadily smaller in the ongoing drive for greater efficiency.

Pensions and benefits on average are much lower than wages for individuals, so that those leaving the workforce reduce their demand on the GNP, leaving more available for others, not less.

An equitable distribution of wealth from the GNP is a national concern, and the pension sector cannot be left to the whims of market forces and private insurance schemes, where profit-making is the main objective and total collapses can occur.

LESLIE A POPE
Wolverhampton

Desperate to get away: two Albanian men trying to climb on board a boat leaving for Italy yesterday at the Albanian port of Durres, near Tirana Photograph: Santiago Lyon/AP

Children in peril as the line to Albania goes dead

Sir: It is frightening to witness the self-destruction in Albania. ChildHope has supported a small and dedicated group of Albanians who are running a scheme working with street children which we set up in 1992, back in the early days of the country's emergence from the Communist regime. Over the last year, we certainly felt in our bones that something nasty was brewing in the country, but the ferocity of the last three weeks has taken us by surprise.

This afternoon [Friday] we discovered that our daily fax or telephone contact has been broken. This has left us in London with a real sense of doom, knowing that the project, the staff and the children in their care are isolated and left to an uncertain fate.

We can suggest no quick-fix solutions, but clearly the West's expectations of Albania were too great to be fulfilled in such a short time. It will be shameful if we all turn our back simply because the Albanians discovered something called fraud in their headlong rush into the market economy.

It will be a challenge to help them pick up the pieces, and this time take our time about getting it right.

NICHOLAS FENTON
Director
ChildHope UK
London EC1

Local power must wield a veto

Sir: Sir John Gray (letters, 8 March) is right to demand a debate on the merits of local government forming the electoral college for a reformed second chamber of Parliament.

The many proposals aimed at strengthening local government – from proportional representation to elected mayors – aim to mimic European and American models. What is usually ignored is that the strength of local government abroad lies not in its internal structure but in its relationship to central government.

Federal systems such as the US and Germany have constitutional constraints on the ability of the centre to meddle in local affairs. Senior national politicians in France depend on holding local office such as that of mayor for their success.

In all three cases local authority is guaranteed by a system which gives the locality a veto on changes which affect its status, through direct representation in the second chamber. Such a system should be considered by the Labour government. All the proposals put forward to enhance the status of local government will be irrelevant if they can be undone at Whitehall's whim.

Councillor DEREK ANTROBUS
(Lab, City of Salford)
Swinton, Greater Manchester

Sir: Your leading article of 6 March draws attention to the "dearth of city-wide democracy" to address London's choking public transport problems; and you note the difficulty of incorporating boroughs like Uxbridge "who, historically, have been most reluctant to be included" in London.

The high-handed way the GLC was abolished need not lead to uncritical acceptance of the view that most local government has now to be centred on "conurbations". Most people live in expanded villages. The inwardness that incubates in giant cities leads some to forget that transport links with the major air and sea ports are in just as much need of attention as those within the metropolis.

These considerations suggest an alternative: allow such outer boroughs as fear subsumption to rejoin the counties they were taken from. To the north of the city, amalgamate the counties of Essex, Hertford and Middlesex, having the council meet rotationally in Uxbridge, Chelmsford, Watford and other towns. To the south, likewise, join Surrey in with Kent.

A "leaner and fitter" Greater London could then concentrate on the prodigious problems of the inner city; while there would be just three major authorities, each representing a population about the size of Wales, responsible for thrashing out a fully integrated transport policy fit for the coming century.

DAVID HAMILTON

Dawkins: the last word from a scientist

Sir: Perhaps the late, and great, scientist Peter Medawar may be allowed a last word in the "Dawkins versus religion" discussion:

There is no quicker way for a scientist to bring discredit upon himself and upon his profession that roundly to declare - particularly when no declaration of any kind is called for - that science knows or soon will know the answers to all questions worth asking, and that questions which do not admit a scientific answer are in some way non-questions or "pseudoquestions" that only simpletons ask and only the gullible profess to be able to answer.

(Advice to a young scientist, 1979)

IAN FLINTOFF
London SW6

■ *An error in transcription of a letter published on 11 March from Canon John Inge, of Ely Cathedral, produced the statement that "there is a shortage of religious people who could be relied upon to produce intelligent, informed and constructive contributions to any debate". This should have read "there is no shortage ..."*

Bristol struggles with slavery shame

Sir: Many of us in Bristol are campaigning for a long-overdue acknowledgement of the city's connection with the slave trade. Over half a million slaves were carried across the Atlantic in Bristol-based ships.

However, Linda Bellos ("Four historic weeks in British racial history", 11 March) does little to help the campaign by repeating the myth about the Ilfracombe wreck.

The ship was not carrying slaves. They were black prisoners of war captured by General Abercromby's army in the West Indies in the war against France. The French had recruited many freed slaves into their army and navy. The prisoners were on their way to the Admiralty Prison at Stapleton near Bristol. It was normal to use chains when prisoners of war were being transported.

BARRY WILLIAMSON
Bristol

Sir: I must acknowledge Britain's role as a slave-exploiting and trading nation because it is a historical fact – but will Linda Bellos acknowledge the collaboration of some African leaders with that trade, or the fact that Britain was the first great power to abolish it within her territories at the turn of the 19th century, or the role of the Royal Navy in seeking to suppress it in subsequent years?

We will only be able to live together in harmony if we face both the good and the bad in our shared histories.

R S FOSTER
Sheffield

Common sense on a foggy motorway

Sir: Francis Roads (letter, 13 March) points out that motorway speed limit signs in fog are frequently inappropriate because of the delay in revising them. But the nature of fog is that patches of poor visibility drift around too quickly for any warning system to react in time.

Common sense is a more reliable safeguard than warning signs. The big problem is that the normal visual clues drivers use for assessing speed and distance are absent. One way to keep out of trouble is to imagine a brick wall across the carriageway at the limit your visual range and to ask yourself: can I stop before I hit it?

J S EVANS
Chesham, Buckinghamshire

Hedy's partner in torpedo project

Sir: Your article (28 February) about Hedy Lamarr and George Antheil and their torpedo guidance system contained an error. George Antheil was not married to Hedy Lamarr. He was married to – and stayed married to – Boski Marcus, who lived until about 1981. George died in 1959. He was definitely a lady's man and no doubt a Lamarr lover, not husband.

As a pianist who has recently recorded and edited Antheil's piano music, I'm sure that George would have loved your story, since he made up a few of them himself (such as being eaten by lions in Africa as a publicity stunt before the *Ballet Mécanique* Paris première).

His son, Peter Antheil, told me in a phone conversation in January that Hedy and George *gave* the patent to the Navy out of patriotism, a fact that Peter and Lamarr's son have long regretted.

MARTHANNE VERBIT
Newport, Rhode Island, USA

Scattered relics of British electronic achievements

Sir: T C H Going (letter, 11 March) regrets the UK's failure to present our achievements in the field of telecoms and electronics with a national museum. He may gain some consolation from the news that the Royal Corps of Signals is expanding and renovating the Museum of Army Communications at Blandford in Dorset through the generosity of serving and retired officers and soldiers of the corps, the defence electronics industry and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The history of military signalling tells much of our nation's telecoms history, since many of the advances in the technology of communications and cryptography have been driven by our defence needs.

J H GRIFFIN
Salisbury

Sir: T C H Going is quite right when he says Britain needs a National Museum of Communications. There is already a very good Museum of Submarine Telegraphy at Porthcurno, and Marconi was at Poldhu, and BT has an Earth Station at Goonhilly – all this in Cornwall. Perhaps it would be sensible to locate the national museum in Penzance, so that visits could also be made to these other historic and contemporary sites of activity.

Dr MIKE WEAVER
Linacre College
Oxford

Sir: Since BT is closing the BT Museum, I recommend it give the 800 exhibits to the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, with an endowment for a gallery dedicated to telecommunications. Visitors to London can already enjoy displays of telecommunications technology at the Science Museum.

ALEXANDER CHABLO
Manchester

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

LETTER *from* THE EDITOR

Now then. Sometimes one just has to apologise, fulsomely, abjectly, the brow sweat-beaded, shoulders lolling, lips wet with penitence. On Tuesday, we went for Gordon Brown on the front page, reporting criticism of his team's leaking against other Labour MPs, and comparing the shadow Chancellor, in a photo-montage, with a character in the film *Reservoir Dogs*.

So listen, guys. I'm sorry. It was unfair – wrong – badly researched. It was in fact Mr Orange whose head we replaced with Gordon Brown's, thus leaving two Mr Browns, alongside Mr Blond and Mr White and Co. As I say, just bad journalism.

I'll say this for New Labour, it can still make jokes at its own expense. I was invited (non-paying guest) to listen to Tony Blair at a fund-raising London bash on Wednesday night. Among those present, and speaking, was Prescott, J. The Labour leader paid him a handsome tribute, lauding his loyalty and forbearance. As an example, Blair said that Prescott had been travelling south from his constituency and caught the very end of a news bulletin on the car radio – something about the "decision to privatise state pensions". Cursing, Prescott reflected that he'd been cut out of yet another Labour policy shift. Only later was it gently explained to him that this was a Conservative announcement.

Meanwhile, all around, was the unmistakeable murmuring sound of an establishment changing sides. Perhaps the most politically revealing, sign-of-the-times comment came from another guest, whose firm specialises in privatisations. That company, once fiercely pro-Conservative, had changed its policy, he told me cheerfully: "We no longer back parties, we back governments." Phew! Just in time!

Reflections on titles, week two. Letters have come in both for and against the idea that *The Independent* should abandon printing people's titles – Lords, Professors, Drs and so on. Pros and antis arrive in roughly equal quantities. The letters against titles tend to be breezily democratic; readers who want them kept say we should give as much information as possible and that, in the words of Charles Brodie of Warwickshire, getting rid of them would "add greatly to the dullness of nations".

For myself, I am resolutely irresolute. Many are simply out of date pomposities – if Roy Jenkins is better known than Lord Jenkins, stick with Roy. But it seems sensible to use titles where not doing so would confuse the reader and where they add really useful information. They are, or ought to be, little more than formalised adjectives. Tabloid papers, after all, have developed a utilitarian title language of their own. Not Mr Jones, but "Lout Jones". Not

> Perhaps in future people will address each other using tabloid titles. 'Fine morning, Love Cheat McDonald'. 'Indeed it is, Wild Child Reilly'

Miss Fox, but "Page Three Stunner Sam". And these are, in their way, as specific and useful as "Esquire" or "Mistress" once were. Perhaps, in the course of time, these will become fixed and traditional too; so that, in the 2050s people will unthinkingly address one another: "Fine morning, Love Cheat McDonald ..." "Indeed it is, Wild Child Reilly."

On the other hand, I have been reminded that anti-traditional naming rarely works, while finishing a magnificent and harrowing book about the Russian Revolution – *A People's Tragedy*, by Orlando Figes. Figes recounts the names Bolsheviks chose for their children when they were "Octobered" (rather than christened). These included obvious plays on Lenin, Marx and Trotsky. But some, believing that the West was more advanced, chose any Western word to hand. Thus there were little Bolsheviks toddling around in the Twenties who answered to Traviata, Embryo, and Vinaigrette.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

This irresponsible scaremongering will not only damage the meat industry here in Britain, but will also damage our standing in Europe – **Douglas Hogg**, *Minister of Agriculture, condemns his critics*

The damage done to the English countryside by the Common Agricultural Policy is the best argument that Jimmy Goldsmith's Referendum Party possesses – **Roy Hattersley**, *Labour MP*

I like the dark one. She's the only one who shows any sign of intelligence – **Lord Healey**, *Labour peer, when asked for his views about the Spice Girls*

I do not believe power-dressing will happen again. This is not the time for women to be surrogate men – **Lynne Franks**, *public relations consultant*

I was always sure he would be 100 per cent successful because he is the first gay product that can be sold over the counter instead of under it – **John McKitterick**, *designer of the anatomically explicit Billy, the world's first gay doll*

This train will be going nowhere for seven minutes because there aren't very many trains behind us – *announcement to London Underground passengers at Chancery Lane station*

I'm not a workaholic. I'm lazy. I'm just time efficient – **John McLaren**, *merchant banker, who has sold the book and film rights for his first novel for £1m*

the saturday story

The state of the Union

The juvenile, the complacent and the snobbish cavort in shallow debates, and Oxford's students love it, says Peter Popham, after hearing the case for blondes. Where has all the politics gone?

On Thursday night in Oxford, large teenagers practise wheelies down the steps of the station, over and over again, the multiple competing bus companies jam the streets with their clashing liveries and the yoof population of this surprisingly coarse-grained Midlands town hunkers down for another long night of boozing and brawling.

Within the Victorian neo-Gothic confines of the Oxford Union Society, however, that world seems far away. One hears tell that in the 1920s, Communist members of the union, dressed in white tie and tails, poured out into the streets of the town and beat up members of the working class, with the idea of aggravating class tensions and thus precipitating the revolution. It didn't work, of course, and 70 years later the toffs and would-be toffs remain cloistered behind the red brick walls and leaded lights.

On Thursday, they gathered for a bit of silliness, the "Farewell" debate, last of the term and of the current presidency. The theme is not original: "This House believes that blondes have more fun". But it enables the union to advertise the debate inside the programme with a particularly lubricious photograph of Marilyn Monroe, and to dangle the prospect of a bevy of guest beauties, headed by Jerry Hall, before the work-jaded eyes of the membership.

At least Jerry Hall is the name on the poster taped to the front door; but in the later editions scattered around the building it is ominously missing. Yes, Jerry has come down with a cold, and the union has been hit by another in its nasty run of no-shows. As one of the speakers put it in the debate, submitting the departing president to his customary bout of humiliation, "Damon Hill, Patrick Stewart, Sting, Jerry Hall – what an excellent term you almost had, Mr President."

The House assembles to discuss blondes and fun. We are here, while the debate grinds and grunts and farts its way to a sort of conclusion, to consider the question, does the Oxford Union have a job to do any more? Is it doing it? Or is it just a concatenation of puffed-up, prematurely pompous young Tories, best left to stew in their own juice?

Criticism of the union is probably nearly as old as the thing itself, which goes back 174 years. But the thing itself would not be worth the trouble of criticising if it had not attained a highly peculiar stature. This is a place where a bunch of undergraduates gather to trade prejudices, slurs and dirty jokes; but by some strange chemistry of desire and image and determination, it is one of the most famous debating forums in the world: a place to which world-class statesmen, politicians and public figures, including Bobby Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Mother Teresa and Malcolm X, made pilgrimages while in the prime of their careers. They came not to recycle the usual speech for the usual fee (the union pays nothing but expenses) but to engage in genuine cut and thrust, to risk their reputations at the hands of student pipsqueaks, and sometimes to be brought down.

At times it was almost an alternative parliament of the young. Harold Wilson dispatched his foreign secretary, Michael Stewart, to defend the government's pro-American policy on Vietnam, and a torrid time he had of it. When he was president, Tariq Ali hosted Malcolm X, then at the height of his influence.

Hungry and ambitious aspiring politicians such as Edward Heath, Roy Jenkins, Michael Heseltine and William Hague seized the opportunities the union offered both to debate and to rub shoulders with the powerful and famous. Debates of particular consequence were regularly transmitted live on the BBC. It was the only student debating chamber in the world with such charisma.

That is the context in which the Oxford Union has to be discussed, because the place is still in love with and in thrall to its past. Even on a night like this. The union is a cluster of diminutive buildings, comprising a bar with scarlet walls which are hung with old photographs, a large and comfortable library, and out in the garden, on its own, the debating hall, which from the outside looks like a small Victorian railway station.

Tonight the hall's entrance is filled with large photographs of foaming pints of Guinness (the beer is free to participants, within reason). Inside there is a high chamber with a balcony. The benches for the union's officers, who must wear white ties, are ranged opposite each other by the chairman's seat, as in the House of Commons. The rest, filling the hall, face the chair.

All is as it has been for many decades, with one or two special touches just for tonight. The busts of ancient eminences around the walls, for example, are wearing Union Jack bowler hats. A multi-coloured bouncy castle is being inflated behind the chair. One large Guinness ad has invaded the hall. A smoke machine has been concealed somewhere.

Of the matter of the debate itself it would be charitable to say as little as possible. Simon Johnson, an epicene blond youth, president of the Edmund Burke Society, who has conceived a perverse fixation on Nicholas Soames, is fluently funny and rude, in the preferred snobbish mode, speaking of the retiring president's "family tree – that's where he lives", and of his father, "a light blue, due to restricted circulation".

He is followed for the anti-blondes by a narrow-shouldered, carrot-haired geek in gold glasses called Charles Hoare, who has the misfortune to be related to Douglas Hogg (his nickname is Mad Cow). Hogg was president here, as was his father, Lord Hailsham, but on Thursday night's showing Mad Cow will not be following in their footsteps unless all his contemporaries are wiped out, perhaps by CJD. He mentions "homosexuals" and "lesbians" many times, like a 12-year-old, as if the words themselves were intrinsically hilarious.

The only other speaker from the university is the president-elect, Sam Gyimah, who sports a blond wig (and a nun's habit) although he is actually black. His speech is no worse or better than any of the rest; but given the routine trashing handed out to the sexually divergent, one is pleasantly surprised to note that the House refrains from making jokes about his colour.

The other speakers included two women pretending to be mutants and two blonde page-three girls, one of whom, Joanne Guest, wearing black knickers and bra and head-to-toe fishnet, declares, "I can equivocably state that I am blonde." Floella Benjamin shrewdly sizes up her audience and treated them to her *Play School* routine, which went down very well. The only really perceptive remark of the evening comes from the comedienne Jenny Ross, who spoke of her pity for Patsy Kensit "when she realises she's lumbered herself with a complete and utter twat for a fiancée".

Finally the lights go down, a strobe comes on, the chamber fills with smoke, and the president is carted away. I have rarely spent an evening more childishly entertained since the age of 10 – but Farewell debates, as it was strenuously pointed out, are always like that. A glance through the rest of the programme for the term shows, however, that it is not alone. Why, the equivocable Joanne Guest was here for a second night running (on Wednesday she fielded questions about how many men she had made love to at the same time). Other debates this term included such intellectual killers as "This House believes that the Beatles contributed more to British music than Oasis ever will", and "Enid Blyton's stories are still appropriate for today's child".

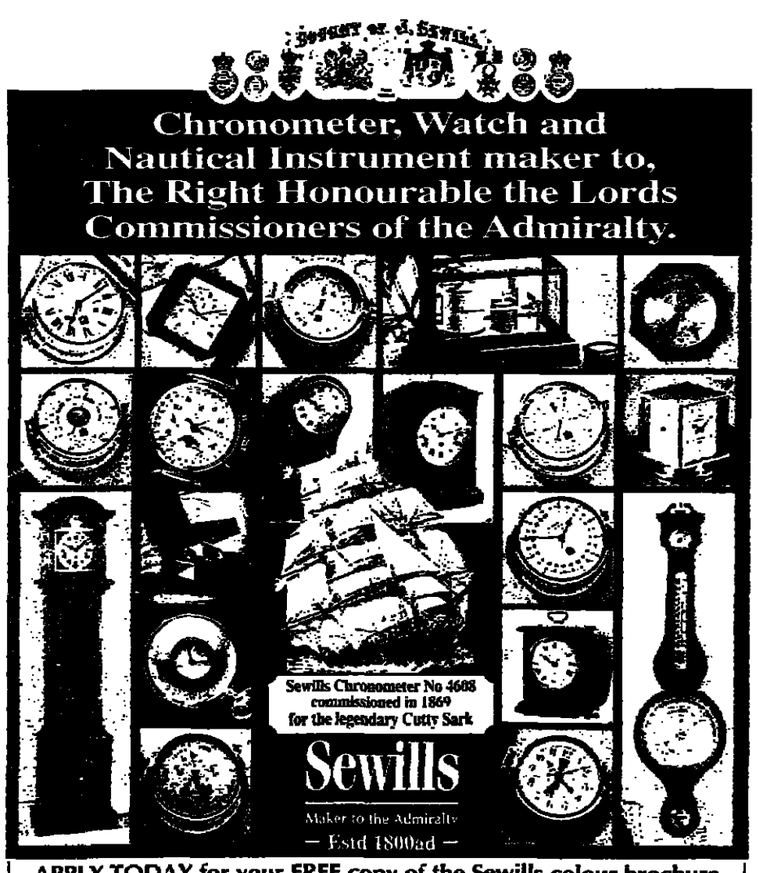
Devolution and Europe drew relatively big hitters and strong performances, and Lord Tebbit, predictably enough, was a massive hit. But much of the programme was taken up by the likes of Ffyona Campbell, *Coronation Street*, quiz nights, comedians, and the no-showing Sting. Increasingly, the intellectual and political pretensions of the past are becoming an empty pose, a tradition that must of course be perpetuated (like all traditions) but which for the sake of bums on seats is increasingly overshadowed by froth and nonsense.

The arrival of Max Clifford last year, with OJ Simpson in tow, was an augury of the way the place must go: more celebs, the dodgier and tackier the better; more book-launch tie-ins (Stephen Fry, here recently, could have filled the place twice); less and less evidence that the union believes in its guts that its amazing reputation is still relevant.

It is not surprising that many of Oxford's students have no time for the union at all, regarding it, in the words of one graduate, as "crapulous, shabby and pathetic". Anthony Howard was president in 1955, and as he sees it the union's decline is a function of the decline of the nation. "Something happened around the mid-Fifties," he says, "perhaps around the time of the Suez crisis. Up until then, it knew its place in the scheme of things. The problem is that the tradition it was carrying proved top-heavy in the Eighties and Nineties. I think the union only really had meaning when Britain was a great power, and it's been looking for its way ever since."

So with the political and intellectual pretensions of the union growing threadbare, what remains are the social ones. No sign of decline there: "Snobbish, class-ridden, puffed-up, undemocratic", fumed one former non-member, "a place for teenagers who want to be middle-aged, to be their fathers before their time." It is an irredeemable place, where the complacent and snobbish go through the rituals that confirm them in their pride and privilege. It is going to last for ever.

Double first: models Joanne Guest and Debee Ashby at this term's farewell debate, 'This House believes that blondes have more fun' Photograph: John Lawrence



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jo brand's week

I have spent half this week in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, at the Angles Theatre, performing a play written with my friend, actress Helen Griffin. We did it in Wisbech because the bloke that runs the theatre is a friend and also it's nice to get out of London and avoid the beady eyes of the London critic fraternity. I have had some lovely encounters with the residents of Wisbech, including an approach the other day from a very respectable middle-aged man who came up to me and said, "Jo Brand, I think you are a marvellous comedienne, and I say this as a man of the cloth." Good Lord, this is a bit of a turn up for the books. I have spent my entire comedy career assuming that I am *persona non grata* with the clergy and now I discover I've got a fan with a dog collar. Time for a rethink on my assimilation into the establishment I think.

It makes a refreshing change to see someone speaking out against the sickening commercialisation that has overtaken huge companies like the Disney Corporation. The ferocious marketing approach they take these days results in parents being put under pressure to buy everything that these companies produce. And the links with other big organisations to push the product even more, mean we are saturated with the latest gimmick.

Well, the family of Victor Hugo in France have had enough. They have seen the fruits of the great writer's imagination turned into pure commercialism by McDonald's and the supermarket chain, Monoprix. Esmerelda has become a Demi Moore lookalike and Quasimodo a rather Hobbit-like cuddly thing. In the days that we watched Disney as kids, the films were not accompanied by a whole range of crappy plastic toys. I am sure the protests of the Hugo family will fall on deaf ears as the great money-making machine moves on to the next venture, but at least someone is making a little stand.

Fat Germans are not happy and have got themselves organised enough to have their own congress. They have again asked Chancellor Helmut Kohl to become their patron after he turned down the offer last year. Fat people in Germany are demanding bigger seats on trains and planes and bigger car interiors. According to my brother, who lives in Germany, Helmut Kohl's nickname is *Birne*, which means "pear", because of his shape, although his name actually means "cabbage". I don't suppose even normal-sized people would mind bigger seats on planes and airline companies would have to enlarge them all, because it would be a nightmare if people such as myself were led to the fatties seats at the back of the plane like lepers. Still, at least we might get extra portions at meal times.

Every time we have an election in this country, commentators tend to remark that it is the dirtiest one ever. Despite this, with each approaching election, new ideas pop up to ensure that ever more scummy weapons with which to fell the opposition are available. This year it seems a new idea has flown round the world from Australia to help put the boot into prospective parliamentary candidates. The basic idea seems to be that the electorate are interviewed on the phone with what appears to be a straightforward questionnaire and then at the end are thrown a few unsavoury facts about a candidate under the auspices of an objective call. This is known as "push polling" and originated in America. Which party do you think is planning to use push polling in Britain? Yep, funnily enough it's the Tories. This smacks of a certain desperation and one wonders whether the voters will fall for it. I like to think that we are politically slightly more literate than the Aussies, but given the whole Blair hair furore I have my doubts.

I am looking forward to this fly-on-the-wall documentary in a few weeks, which portrays a group of your average Tory supporters having dinner, unashamedly slagging off gays and black people, and happily denying that there is such a thing as poverty. Apparently, these diners do not hold back and I wonder why. Weren't they embarrassed by how horrible they would look? Stupidity may be an explanation for their bravado, I suppose, and easier to stomach perhaps, than the fact that these people are actually proud of having these views. The programme was filmed in East Anglia where there are very few black people and doubtless few openly gay people. I did ask the audience in Wisbech how many black people there were in the town. Two, apparently. Having seen this documentary, one assumes they might well want to move.

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army bunk

'Hot bunking', where one man gets in as another leaves, precludes most forms of sexual activity

david aaronovitch

Just because Nicholas Soames says it, it doesn't necessarily follow that it ain't so. On Thursday, after an adverse ruling in the High Court, the armed forces minister repeated his view that allowing openly gay men and women to join or remain in the military would affect its "morale, cohesion and effectiveness".

This is a big charge. As my friend (and Labour's defence spokesperson) Dr John Reid MP said to me in the committee corridor of the Commons last year, it's all very well for us liberal types to sit in our Islington wine bars and call down injunctions on the Chiefs of Staff, but what if having gays in the military really would mean that our ability to defend ourselves is undermined? Wine bars are uncomfortable places when under fire from a howitzer manned by a mad Albanian.

So we must take this argument seriously. For it does not depend on red herrings, like the "gays are no good at fighting" argument. True, one of the ex-naval gay men campaigners is called Duncan Lustig-Prean, whose very name suggests a life spent dressing up and going to naughty clubs, but in reality Duncan turns out to be very brave. He and his friends are not chiefly concerned with choosing the colour of the curtains in the Naafi, or trying to persuade Galliano to design the next generation of battle-dress. The annals of history resound to the names of martial gays, from Alexander, through the Lionheart to General Kitchener.

But what about the intrusive relationship argument? You're in the thick of battle and you must decide whether to fire your grenade launcher in support of X or wield your combat knife to defend Y. Oh, and Y is your boyfriend. Poor old X.

Or the jealous lover variant: the crew of the *Memphis Belle* are flying over Schweinfurth. "Bandit at five o'clock!" calls the pilot. "Nail him, Chuck!" "Not until you apologise for your terrible behaviour yesterday," comes the reply.

Two responses to this. First, just imagine how awful it would have been if, say, Montgomery and Patton had been jealous of each other. The whole Arnhem operation might have become a fiasco. Thank God they were straight! But, more seriously, there is no suggestion that homosexual acts should be permitted, any more than heterosexual ones.

Which leaves us with the discomfort argument. As Michael Portillo put it last year, "People are working in a situation of absolute trust. They are living almost literally on top of one another." Given that closeness, if current servicemen and women get antsy with gays around, that might be enough to lower cohesion, morale and all that stuff.

A recent survey showed that particular areas of concern were sharing tents ("camping tonight"), submarines (the shape?) and something called "hot bunking". This sounds fair enough (who would not be frightened of a bit of involuntary hot bunking?) until one learns that this actually describes a situation in which, when one man leaves a bunk, another gets into it. Thus precluding most prolonged forms of sexual activity, rather than encouraging them.

And, above all, the showers. As one sergeant put it, "Men don't like taking showers with men who like taking showers with men". But wait a minute! We don't want them to like showering, because – if they did – we would not like to shower with them.

Which brings me to Dr John Reid's Shower Test, whose logic goes thus: we agree that women should not be forced to shower with men, don't we? And for why? Because they would be uncomfortable being naked in front of people for whom they might be a source of sexual attraction. Well then, doesn't it follow that the same women should not be forced to shower with other women by whom they might conceivably be considered desirable?

Mmm. But why then does this not apply to schools, or universities, or sports clubs, or hospitals, where we straights may be forced – willy-nilly, so to speak – to become the unwilling objects of lustful stares? I often feel myself to be at risk of envious or strange glances in the shower, but I have racked my memory and I can't remember this ever having been a problem. Certainly not one that just turning around didn't solve.

So, Nick, turn around. If there's anyone watching.

Mao and Deng are dead, long live shopping

by Reggie Nadelson

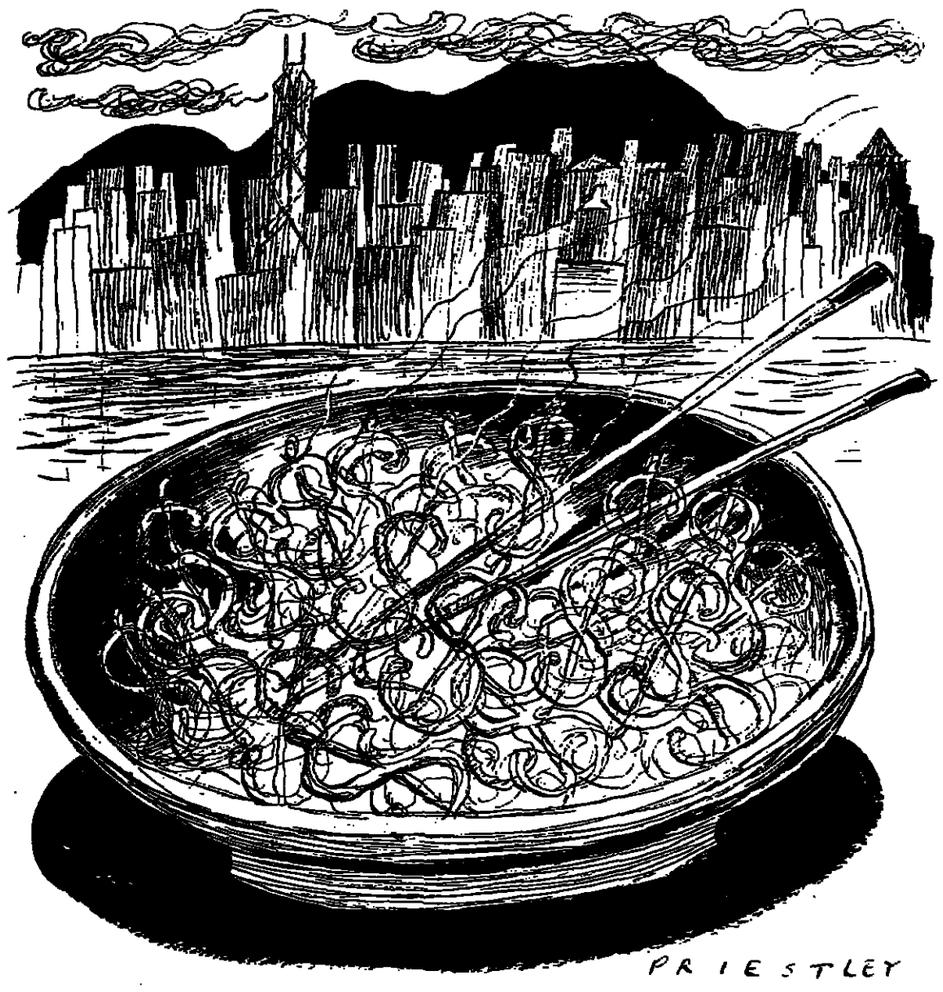
"He who does not get rich is a dumb bear," proclaimed Deng Xiaoping. I'm thinking of having it engraved on the waving Deng watch I bought in Hong Kong recently. My watch – the little Deng smiling up at me, his clock-work arm moving up and down – is a lot more emblematic than all those wailing apparatchiks at his funeral. Sometimes I think all Communism left behind was the misery, the corruption and the kitsch – Gorby toilet paper, busts of Lenin, Che berets, Mao on watches and on walls. "He who does not get rich is a dumb bear." They should have put the slogan on a tombstone for Deng instead of crumbling him up like an old potato chip or a stale fortune cookie.

No wonder Deng wanted Hong Kong for his own so much. Money money money. And shopping. I've never seen so much money, so much *stuff*, never met so many rich people as in Hong Kong. "Hong Kong's the richest refugee camp in the world," an acquaintance said. "The parents or grandparents all ran away from China, from the Communists. Money's the only security, you can't have enough, you've got to keep piling it up."

I was in Hong Kong, in fact, to research the rich for a thriller. The American hero of my book is in love with a rich Chinese American babe. She's married to a very, very rich Hong Kong guy, a member of the New Comprador class whose only ideology is money, who knows China is the future and thinks national borders are a joke.

The old breed of comprador brokered opium to the East and all kinds of goodies (silks, spices) back to the West. This new breed, official or criminal – it doesn't really matter – broker everything in all directions, and the devil's in the detail: CDs, sportswear, computers, money, babies, illegals, body parts. What they really broker is the great 21st-century conspiracy between two ideologies built to destroy each other. Instead of fleeing Communism like their parents or grandparents, the New Compradors see shopping as the real ideology; call it global commerce if you want to get fancy.

In the countdown to July, as the New Compradors rev up the millennial merger, no one knows if it's going to produce a new world order or a mutant freak, or both. One thing's sure: neither the new compradors nor the new Commies has democracy top of the shopping list. But, then, who ever promised us more than 200 years of democracy and wouldn't you rather nip off to Australia for the beach or Vail, Colorado for the skiing? Most of the rich guys I met in Hong Kong told me things will be just fine when the British go home in July, but then most of them have cut their deals with the Chinese, and all have property outside China with passports to match.



Money money money. And shopping. I've never seen so much money, so much stuff, never met so many rich people as in Hong Kong

The New Compradors – Deng was surely their godfather – are charming, cool and modern, having been educated in the US or Britain. They wear Brooks Brothers shirts. Italian suits. Baseball hats. Some ride Harleys. Some race horses. Others collect modern art. Most are married to gloriously hospitable high-maintenance babes, the Tai Tai, the ladies who lunch, the most beautiful women I've met, and the most down to earth. They tell you "a full-time maid is the best Valium" (I met two ladies who share eight maids between them), and ask you straight out how much you make or what you drive.

The guys talk the talk and they can do it in soundbites appetising enough for the wariest Westerner. But they are not Western, as one of them pointed out to me. I met Jack (we'll call him Jack) at the top of his skyscraper, one of those competitive architectural marvels Hong Kongers have built to their god. (Mammon never lived so well.) Charmingly, in perfect American English, "Jack" explained how the Chinese are different from Westerners, how they see things through different eyes, out of a different culture. I think he was saying we should butt out, especially when it comes to stuff like democracy. He doesn't have to worry. The West, with Bill Clinton in the lead, can't seem to do enough to kowtow to the Chinese – just think about campaign contributions, just think about those nights in the Lincoln bedroom.

"To get rich is glorious." Deng is grinning up at me from the watch I bought at Shanghai Tang, a shop devoted to the marketing of old China and high-end Commie kitsch, and owned by David Tang, the chief cheerleader for the New Compradors. Tang speaks like the Queen Mum. Or Jeeves, maybe. He was born in Hong Kong, where his grandfather made millions with a bus company. His own father, Billy, was reputedly a gambler and racehorse owner who had a Chinese restaurant in London called Mr Tang's. David didn't get to England until he was 14: he barely spoke English. He learnt fast. He became a clubbable kind of guy.

"Made by Chinese" is Tang's motto, it's on every label at Shanghai Tang, where you can purchase silver-plated chopsticks or linens embroidered with coolies, and the bespoke tailor can whip you up a Cheongsam in luscious red silk or a pink velvet Mao suit. Tang himself wears a modified Chinese suit, call it Mao or Mandarin, and he smokes Cuban cigars. (He's the Cuban consul in Hong Kong, which carries with it the distribution rights to Havanas). As a businessman, Tang understands it's money that matters. He told me he feels that it is only now that Britain has begun to pay money its due *respect*. But as Hong Kong's major domo to its social scene, escort to Fergie and to Di, Tang also knows that to keep things dynamic in a culture already stuffed with stuff, you have to broker not just hard cash but style.

Tang is a master of the art of the theme park. At Shanghai Tang and at his China Club, where the Hong Kong rich drink bubbly at the Long March Bar, he plays off our feverish dreams of the Orient that never was. Noel Coward meets Indiana Jones.

The mystery of the Orient. The Shanghai of the Thirties when Noel Coward did sit around the Cathay Hotel writing *Private Lives*, when there were evil gangsters and beautiful women. Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth. Somerset Maugham meets Mao Zedong.

"I hope to become the Ralph Lauren of the East," Tang has said, and as Lauren built an empire reinventing what he perceived as British upper-class life, so Tang is remaking old China. Tang's China Club – it costs around £35,000 a year just to join – is on the 13th floor of the Bank of China Building. It is alleged that in the bad old days, back before Mao and Deng got the new religion, Communist agents worked day and night here to destroy the running dogs of imperialism.

From the terrace of the club you can see the Hong Kong skyline. All that neon. All that light. Hong Kong looks like it could burn itself up. Inside, by midnight, the club buzzes with beautiful people. Waiters in Mao jackets pad across oriental rugs. Ceiling fans twirl, silver spittoons glisten, there are red silk cushions in the dining room and silver chopsticks. And from the wall, in a huge portrait in oils, Mao Zedong beams down, benign, fat, happy in the presence of so much glorious money, as the club mynah bird sings tunes from Peking opera, or was it *Madame Butterfly*?

Recently I heard that David Tang is about to expand, moving into New York, maybe London or LA. Mao is dead. So is Deng. If anyone had any brains, they'd make Tang the next real head of China. This guy has his finger on the pulse. He is new China man, the New Comprador. Tang is no dumb bear. He is, in fact, if you'll excuse the pun, one very smart cookie.

Reggie Nadelson's thriller 'Hot Poppies' is published on Monday (Faber & Faber, £14.99).

The strange death of political loyalties

Trevor Phillips

The single large party expressing a united view seems ridiculous today. What is the Labour or Tory line on cloning?

The end of the party is in sight. Whatever the outcome of this election it will be the last time that political machines with labels will be pre-eminent in our democracy. In a generation, loyalty to political parties as we know them will be dead. And ironically, among the principal assassins will be the creators of the most fearsome electoral machines of modern times – Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher.

It is no surprise that Baroness Thatcher looks so fondly on the Labour leader; he is, after all, merely completing a process she started – the remorseless subjugation of party interests to the will of a leadership that carries on a dialogue with the electorate, unmediated by the self-interested murmuring of party barons.

This is not just another way of saying that there is now no difference between the main political parties. Life under a Blair administration would not be the same as life under a Major government. Labour looks as though it may be even tougher on public spending than the Tories. Blair's constitutional ambitions are radically different to Major's. And their styles of government will be marked by a huge generational difference, reflecting an average age difference between the Labour and Tory top teams of several years. There is clear water available here for anyone who looks.

However, voting is not only about a rational political choice, or about economic self-interest. It is also a cultural act. For most of this century, people have tended to think of themselves as belonging either to a Tory or a Labour tradition. You were either working class or middle class. Voting for the other lot seemed eccentric, even indecent; the sort of act reserved for snooty little madams who had got above themselves, or for eternally idealistic Fabian types.

Even non-traditional groupings have their prejudices. Indian voters have what used to be thought of as a super-conservative profile – more affluent, better-educated, entrepreneurial. Their homes, cars and private schooling shout "Tory voter". Yet they resolutely continue to choose Labour in huge numbers. Why? Because, in spite of Mr Major's own clean bill of health on the issue, they still regard the Conservatives as terminally infected by racial bias.

New loyalties can be created, but there is something more fundamental going on. Although the growth in support for single-issue pressure groups is often overstated, it is none the less significant. The pollsters tell us that three out of five young people won't show up at the voting booth unless someone promises free Oasis albums on production of a completed voting slip. The cultural ties are not being rebuilt or transferred: they are simply wearing thin, to the point of invisibility.

The personal triumph of both Blair and Thatcher lies precisely in hastening this cultural fragmentation. She persuaded the lower middle classes, increasingly out of sorts with a workerist Labour party, that they could happily vote Tory. Similarly, Blair seems to have convinced the new middle classes that they can retain their identity, but still share his aims. Indeed, the notorious focus groups no doubt show that much of Blair's appeal lies in the fact that he is not rooted in any of the great Labour traditions – he is not Fabian intellectual, nor union apparatchik, nor even regional baron. Whatever he is, it is new. But it is *him*, and what he is, not his party, that counts to Labour's new converts.

One consequence is that political parties are in danger of becoming virtually useless as a ready-made means of defining our stance on some big issues. How does the Labour-Tory divide help us to define where we stand on Europe? It does not. On crime or education? On the advances in technology that have produced cloning and new methods of reproduction? MPs will search in vain for a coherent philosophical position from their party HQs.

Political parties represent historical identities. Those historical identities become more evidently anachronistic every week, and the single large party that claims coherently to express a united view on every large question looks more ridiculous every day. As the work of the think-tank Demos and others has shown, we are now a people of multiple identities. We are workers, but we are also shareholders; we are Scots or Londoners, but we are also Britons and Europeans. A political process that tries to force us to suppress all but one of those identities is bound to end up by alienating us.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We may even be facing a golden opportunity to revive politics. The most moribund aspect of our political system is local government, all too often populated by anoraks, hacks and careerists. Our towns and cities deserve better than to be run by people whose main qualification is the ability or desire to give up time to sit on committees. This week, the Fabian Society published a pamphlet, co-authored by the MP Margaret Hodge, supporting the concept of mayors directly elected by the voters. In London, this approach is supported by three quarters of the electorate. More importantly, Tony Blair likes it. It is, however, hated by the party machines. After all, genuinely popular candidates might be chosen; and then who knows what they might do by appealing over the head of the party to the people?

The danger of giving the people unfettered choice is illustrated by the fact that two of the bookies' top three candidates for the Mayor of London are clearly unsuitable: Richard Branson and myself. But while our own capital languishes for want of leadership, its competitor New York's revival has been engineered by a multi-party administration. The mayor is Republican, but his chosen deputy is a Democrat.

Every day brings a new proposal that will loosen the grip of party discipline on the throat of politics. Increasingly, that grip feels more like the last convulsive clutch of a dying man. Proportional representation, devolution, the willingness of MPs to abandon the whip are more than straws in the wind. They are the harbingers of a new and more interesting way of running our lives.

SHEARINGS AIR HOLIDAYS

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Monday 7 April
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Tuesday 8 April
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- Transfers from Vienna airport to Hotel and return
- Service of a Shearings Holidays Tour Escort

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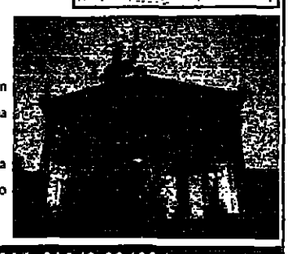

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Bonfield could get £550,000 BT bonus

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive of British Telecom, could gain long-term share bonuses worth almost £550,000 for the 14 months since he joined the company, according to documents mailed to shareholders this week.

The information is revealed in the listing particulars sent to BT's 2.3 million investors giving details of the proposed £13bn merger with MCI, the US long-distance phone carrier. They show that by 27 February Sir Peter, who moved to BT from computer giant ICL in January 1996, could be granted a maximum of 125,137 shares in the company depending on performance targets under the executive Long Term Remuneration Plan (LTRP).

Participants in the scheme, which has been criticised by large shareholders, have to wait five years before receiving the shares. Based on BT's share price of 437p during trading yesterday, Sir Peter's maximum award would be worth £546,849. Sir Peter's minimum possible share award earned so far is 20,856 shares worth £91,141.

The possible award comes on top of Sir Peter's basic salary, which rose by £95,000 from January to £570,000 and an annual cash bonus.

BT has denied speculation this week that some short-term bonuses, which are agreed this month by the executive pay committee, could be raised to as much as 100 per cent of basic pay to reflect the achievement of the MCI deal.

The LTRP began in September 1994, replacing an executive share option scheme which had run since BT privatisation. Members have to invest a percentage of their annual bonus, which then multiplies depending on how BT shares perform in the 100-share index.

The maximum award comes if BT shares are in the top 40 in the index over five years. It was intended to cover about 40 senior executives and by last month some 2.7 million shares had been provisionally allocated.

The other main beneficiary listed in the document is Robert Brace, finance director, who unlike Sir Peter joined the scheme at the outset. He stands to earn between £132,647 and £739,233 from the LTRP, which gives him between 30,354 and 169,161 shares, based on yesterday's share price.

Sir Iain Vallance, chairman, is not a member of the scheme, although he has 237,883 share options outstanding from the previous scheme.

Anne Simpson, joint managing director of the shareholder advisory group Pirc, was one of the main critics of the LTRP.

She said: "We advised clients at the annual meeting in 1995 that the scheme was too lenient. The performance targets were relatively low and the multiplier effect of the plan, we calculated, could give participants up to seven times their own investment in shares through a complex formula."

A BT spokeswoman defended the LTRP yesterday, claiming it was in line with industry best practice. "It's always been judged to be more taxing than many schemes because employees have to stay with it for five years and stay with the company for five years."

City workers shun formality to swap office garb for Red Nose Day celebration

Noses have it: St Paul's Cathedral provides the backdrop for a fun run by London workers raising funds for Comic Relief, which last night was on course to beat its £22m target. Elsewhere, office workers dressed down for the day Photograph: Brian Harris

Sorrell set to collect another share windfall

Patrick Tooher

Martin Sorrell, chief executive of advertising giant WPP, is in line to scoop another share bonanza on Monday, worth £3.2m at last night's closing price, under a reward scheme that could net him £25m over five years.

The issue of 1.2 million free shares, which Mr Sorrell must keep until September 1999, will represent the second of up to four bumper payouts that he will receive if WPP hits certain performance targets.

Mr Sorrell will collect his latest windfall because WPP's share price has been above 230p for 60 consecutive trading days. Last September Mr Sorrell picked up his first tranche of 1.2 million shares after WPP's shares stayed above a 198p trigger price for the same period. He could qualify for a third share bonus as early as June because another 60-day clock started ticking on Thursday when WPP's shares went back above a new trigger price of 265p. Last night WPP closed 3.5p lower at 272.5p, valuing the company at just over £2bn.

However analysts said a third payout was not imminent. "The market will make sure he only gets one lot of shares each year, just to ensure he keeps performing," said one broker.

At the time the share incentive scheme was approved two years ago WPP's remuneration committee said the conditions attached would be "nearly impossible" to achieve.

Mr Sorrell, who has invested more than £2m of his own money in WPP's shares, also has salary benefits, bonuses and previously awarded share options that could push his five-year total to £25m, of which £14m will be in free shares.

Some institutional investors have criticised the package as appearing to reward Mr Sorrell for merely returning WPP's shares to the level they were at when he joined the company in 1985. WPP's share price peaked at over 900p in 1987 before collapsing to just 27p five years later.

But a series of financial restructurings allowed WPP to stage a recovery and last year it reported pre-tax profits of £153.3m compared to just £8m in 1992.

Lex chief's pay soars by 17%

Sir Trevor Chinn, chairman of Lex Service, saw his total pay jump by 16.9 per cent to £453,667 in 1996, according to the car dealership group's latest annual report and accounts.

The accounts also show that Sir Trevor, who split the roles of chairman and chief executive last year, received a £60,126 performance-related bonus.

Andrew Harrison, who joined as chief executive from Courtaulds in September, received a total of £129,413, which also included a £13,750 bonus. He was also granted 128,534 share options exercisable in 1999 at a price of 389p each. Lex shares closed yesterday at 330p, down 1.5p.

The second-highest paid board member was Peter Harris, finance director, with his remuneration rising from £209,371 to £253,927.

The pay increases came in a year when group profits before exceptional items increased by 22 per cent to £51.2m, while earnings jumped by 14 per cent to 31.3p per share. Dividends were increased from 15p to 16p.

In his first review of the business, Mr Harrison said in the annual report that while returns from Lex Retail improved during 1996, they remained "inadequate".

He said there would be further changes in the structure of car dealerships "as manufacturers react to over-capacity and changing consumer behaviour by creating larger marketing territories".

Three staff leave NatWest

Michael Harrison

NatWest Markets, which has suspended five senior staff over the £90m options mis-pricing scandal, yesterday parted company with another three senior executives following a shake-up in its global debt markets division.

Johan Hattingh, head of European fixed income, and Alby Cator, managing director of European primary markets, have left the investment bank as result of the changes. Separately, Roger Nagioff, head of European equity trading and derivatives, has quit to join Lehman Brothers.

The overhaul follows NatWest's acquisition last year of the US bond house Greenwich Capital and the creation of a new global debt markets division. NatWest stressed, however, that the changes were not connected with the mis-pricing scandal which has resulted in bonuses worth £8m being docked from a handful of employees numbering between five and 10.

The bank's new global debt markets division will be run by Gary Holloway and Chip Kruger, both of whom worked for Greenwich Capital. Mr Holloway will be responsible for US and Asian operations while Mr Kruger will be based in London and be in charge of European debt market operations.

As part of the management changes announced on Thursday following the disclosure of losses in NatWest's interest rate options business, Vincent Tomasi is switching from being head of US debt capital markets in New York to take over as acting head of global debt derivatives in London.

A spokeswoman said the changes, announced to staff on Thursday, played to the strengths of NatWest and Greenwich and would improve the operation of the debt markets division.

However, others point to low morale and say that several staff are keen to depart following the shadow cast by the options mis-pricing episode.

In the first in a series of weekly reports 'The Independent' assesses market perceptions of prospects for EMU

Big questions remain unanswered on Europe's monetary 'big bang'

COUNDOWN TO EMU 656 DAYS TO GO

by Yvette Cooper

In just 656 days, European countries plan to lock their exchange rates, abandon their currencies and commence a great monetary experiment that will affect economies and financial markets across the developed world.

But huge questions remain to be answered. Who will be in and out? How strong or weak will the new currency be? Will it work in practice, or is it so badly designed that it could collapse under its own contradictions?

Each week the *Independent* will be reviewing these questions in the countdown to EMU. We will follow the changes in the financial markets, and publish the results of our regular poll of European analysts – the people who follow the week-by-week developments in most detail – on EMU's progress.

The graph (see right) that we will be updating each week shows the latest financial market views. Over the last two years traders have been betting on a broad-based EMU beginning at the end of the century.

Since 1995, long-term interest rates in Italy, Spain, and Ireland have converged towards German interest rates at an astonishing rate. But the last few months tell a very different story. Rumours of delays and new jitters about the state of the Italian economy have increased the volatility in European bond markets. Moreover the trigger for a sudden change in the markets is as likely to be some new piece of economic data, as it is a statement of intent from a politician or banker.

Bruce Kasman of JP Morgan said: "The German government has placed great emphasis on the Maastricht criteria partly to convince the German public that EMU will be strong and fiscally prudent, but also to draw a line between countries that should be in or out." As a result, European statistics which provide clues about how close each country will come to the Maastricht criteria have become extremely important to the markets. But it is no longer clear that the criteria will be enough to distinguish between Germany's preferences.

Stephen King of HSBC James Capel said: "The chance of Germany making the Maastricht deficit criterion has fallen." German unemployment figures last month increased fears that it would not be able to bring borrowing down, and might itself fail the Maastricht deficit test of 3 per cent. Should that happen, and should Spanish and Italian borrowing come in at a similar level, it will be politically much harder to keep Spain and Italy out. However, letting them in – especially if they all fail the Maastricht tests – raises the chance of the German public rejecting the entire project, as well as making EMU a more risky economic project.

Spanish inflation this week was much lower than expected, leading Bruce Kasman to conclude: "We think Spain will be in and Italy will be out."

But while confidence in Spanish entry has increased, analysts are more dubious about Italy. Italian bond and currency markets have been particularly jittery as a result.

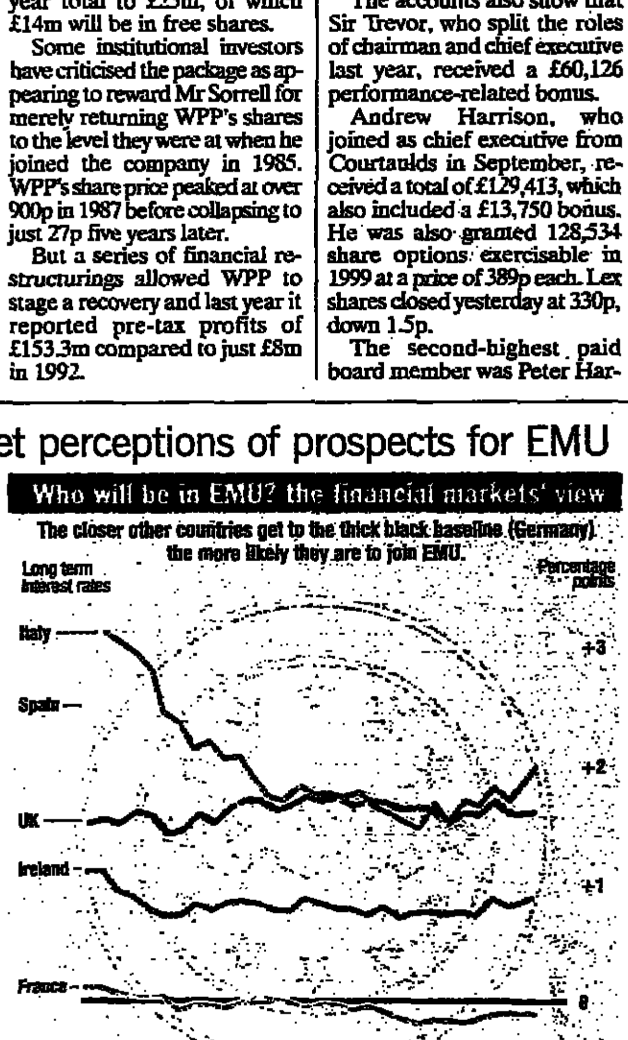
Philip Chitty of ABN Amro said: "We expect that it will still be possible to draw a distinct line between the core European countries on the one hand and the Mediterranean countries like Italy and Spain on the other. We are far from convinced that Spanish and Italian convergence is sustainable."

Within the last two weeks, new data on the German economy suggest the economy is picking up after all, putting the Maastricht limit within reach after all.

Graham Bishop of Salomon Brothers said: "If Germany can't get its government spending down it will look as though it lacks the political will. And that could trigger a political crisis across Europe." The political statements and the economic statistics of the next few months could have a huge impact on the direction in which Europe heads.

Who will be in EMU? the financial markets' view

The closer other countries get to the thick black baseline (Germany) the more likely they are to join EMU.



TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency won't devalue against the Mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in ten year's time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the Mark, then they will demand an extra premium for holding that country's bonds, so the line will move away from the base.

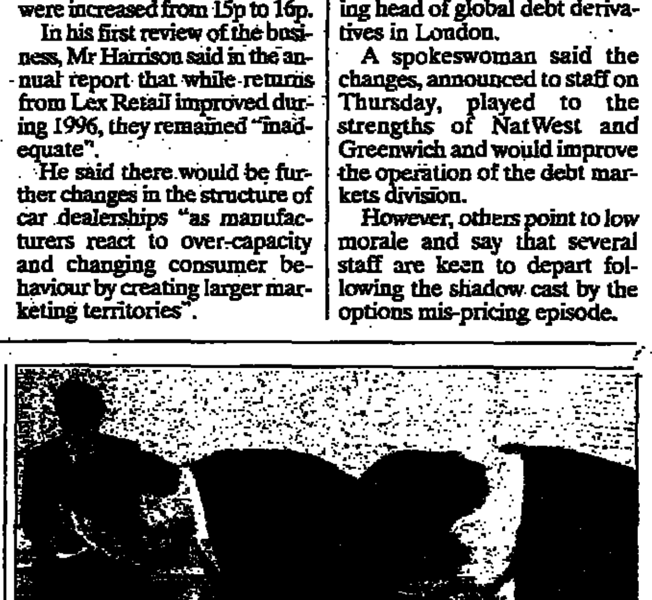
When will EMU start? The City Analysts' View.

Probability EMU starts on time:	64%
Probability EMU is delayed:	24%
Probability EMU never happens:	12%

The Independent asked analysts from:

Nikko Europe, Paine Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC James Capel

what probability they placed on EMU starting on time.



Disgraced: Masashi Suzuki, the Nomura chairman (left), and the resigning president Hideo Sakimaki

Nomura head bows out with public apology

Richard Lloyd Parry
Tokyo

The president of Nomura Securities resigned yesterday, a week after admitting that his company made illegal payments to the family of a gangster and amid rumours of similar misconduct at other Japanese brokerages.

Hideo Sakamaki announced his resignation to "take responsibility" for the scandal, although he has denied any personal involvement and will remain attached to Nomura as an "adviser".

He said: "As the head of a company which is responsible for what happens in markets, I thought it important to resign from corporate management. I am truly sorry," he said, and then placed his hands on a table and bowed deeply.

Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, the Finance Minister, said yesterday that regulatory authorities would probably investigate other brokerage houses, after growing rumours that Nomura's competitors may also have been involved in illegal relationships with professional blackmailers, called sokaiya in Japanese, who extort large sums by threatening to disrupt shareholders' meetings.

Reports in Japan yesterday suggested that the sokaiya-related company which was illegally paid by Nomura, also had accounts at Japan's other big three brokerages, Daiwa, Nikko and Yamaichi Securities. "It's hard to believe the authorities will ignore such reports," said Mr Mitsuzuka. "It's common sense for them to conduct an appropriate investigation."

Mr Sakamaki's post was taken over by Nomura's chairman, Masashi Suzuki, who promised to "rebuild the Nomura group and hand it to the next generation. By recreating healthy operating systems, Nomura will focus on recovering trust from all market investors and stockholders."

But things are likely to get worse for Nomura before they get better, and over the last week the firm has attracted harsh wide-spread criticism.

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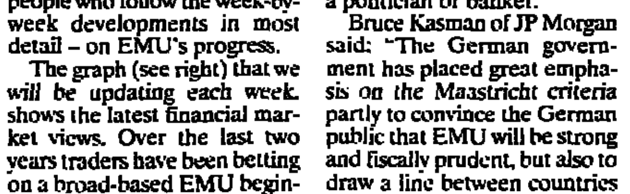
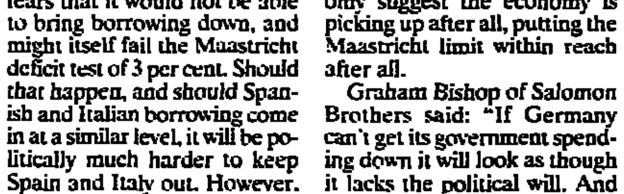


Indices

Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	4397.70	-24.80	-0.6	4444.30	3632.30	3.66
FTSE 250	4720.20	-4.90	-0.1	4729 40	4015.30	3 35
FTSE 350	2175 20	-10.20	-0 5	2194 30	1816 60	3.60
FTSE SmallCap	2374.09	-0.11	-0.0	2374 20	1954.06	2.88
FTSE All-Share	2146.80	-9.25	-0.4	2163.94	1791.95	3.54
New York *	6878.89	-160.48	-2 3	7085.16	5032.94	1.93
Tokyo	17900.48	-282.79	-1.6	22666.80	17303.65	0.89†
Hong Kong	12917 09	-202.04	-1.5	13868.24	10204.87	3.25†
Frankfurt	3349 81	-65.59	-1.9	3460.64	2253 36	1.44†

Statistics as of 14 March

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates / **Bond Yields ***

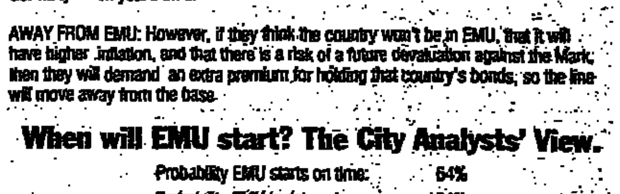
Index	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Year Ago	Long Bond	(%)Year Ago
UK	6.00	6.66	7.34	8.13	7.44	8.25
US	5.56	5.94	6.66	6.36	6 93	6.67
Japan	0.41	0 47	2 24	3 23	-	-
Germany	3 28	3.38	5 71	6 57	6 50	-

*Benchmark Indices

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change%	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change
Cordiant	113.5	9.5	9.1	Yorkshire TT	1162.5	117.5	9.2
Utd Biscuits	250	12.5	5.3	Mcins	830	70	7.8
Bunzl	232	10.5	4.7	De La Rue	592.5	24	3 9

CURRENCIES



Pound

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
$ (London)	1.5930	-1.22c	1.5234
$ (N York)‡	1.5960	-0.33c	1.5235
DM (London)	2.7103	-2.74pf	2.2422
¥ (London)	195.350	-Y0.252	160.414
£ Index	96.8	-0.8	83.2

Dollar

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£ (London)	0.6277	+0.47	0.6564
£ (N York)‡	0.6266	+0.13	0.6564
DM (London)	1.7014	-0.41pf	1.4718
¥ (London)	122.630	+Y0 775	105.300
$ Index	104.2	+0.2	95.5

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago		Index	Latest Yr Ago	Next Figs
Oil Brent $	19.89	+0.28	18.92	RPI	154.4	- 146.0	13 Mar
Gold $	352 55	-0.4	396.75	GDP	109.7+2.6pc	107.0	25 Apr
Gold £	220.72	-0.84	260.44	Base Rates	- 6.00pc	6.75	–

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Greed is the price we pay for free market economy

JEREMY WARNER

'The very high pay of top earners is not the main problem here; the more worrying phenomenon is the polarisation of pay between the well paid and the low paid, between the skilled and the unskilled'

This was a week when executive pay was once more in the headlines, so it was fortuitous that I was able to lunch with Sir Ronald Hampel, who combines his role as chairman of ICI with the poison chalice of heading up the successor committee to Cadbury and Greenbury on corporate governance and executive remuneration.

His predecessor, Sir Richard Greenbury, left the post a deeply disillusioned man, believing that any attempt to enhance understanding and disclosure of executive pay was doomed to failure. Sir Ronald is a realist and shares some of those sentiments; he is not optimistic that anything he does will improve either media understanding of boardroom pay or sensitivity among industrialists to public opinion on these matters. But he believes strongly there is still a task to be done and someone's got to do it. So is he on a hiding to nothing, or can he still make a worthwhile contribution to the debate?

There were two stories in the press this week which highlight the nature of the problem. The first was one that appeared on these pages suggesting that Sir Iain Vallance and Sir Peter Bonfield, chairman and chief executive respectively of British Telecom, were in line for bonuses of £500,000 apiece after an "outstanding" year in the company's affairs. This was one of those stories which, though largely right at the time it was written, later turned out to be wrong, at least in part. Certainly there are forces on the BT board, and on its remuneration committee, that believe the two knighted industrialists should be paid bonuses of this size and but for pre-emptive action by Sir Iain, he might have been offered one.

Documents sent to BT shareholders yesterday in connection with the merger with MCI of the US note that the remuneration committee has agreed to consider paying a "discretionary" bonus of unspecified quantity. Under the old system this could have been anything up to 50 per cent of salary, or around £250,000. However, there were moves to lift this ceiling so as to allow the payment of half a million pounds.

Not any longer, for in a letter to the *Independent*, Sir Iain has said that even if offered a bonus of this size, he would not accept it. I'm not sure I would have done this had I been in Sir Iain's shoes and it is a measure of how sensitive he is to these issues that he has. Sir Iain is that rare commodity, an outstanding industrialist who doesn't appear to be motivated by money, or if he is, he certainly hides it well. After an initial run-in over pay in his first year as chairman of BT, Sir Iain has handled the issue of "fat cat" pay with skill and not a little personal sacrifice. His remuneration has always been reasonable but never excessive for someone of his position.

When the size of the bonus has looked like changing that perception, he has managed to defuse the row by giving away large chunks of it to charity. His letter to the *Independent* is typical of the approach. By adeptly managing to sidestep the privatised utility "fat cat" row, he has done both his company and his shareholders a great service. Unlike British Gas, the company is still intact and going from strength to strength. The politicians and regulators have been deprived of the ammunition needed to meddle and shareholders can boast a company of truly world-class status. Who knows? They might even avoid Labour's windfall profits tax. Sir Iain almost deserves a bonus for it.

Ironically it will be successors who reap the benefits, for the documents filed in connection with the MCI takeover reveal that the policy of restraint is changing. Sir Peter Bonfield will get up to 125,137 free shares in respect of last year under a long-term incentive plan. Admittedly he won't be able to draw on those shares for five years, but provided he stays around, he's banked the equivalent of £500,000 at today's share price. Robert Brace, the finance director, stands to get even more, and this is on top of basic salary and the annual bonus.

This, however, is nothing compared with what MCI directors and senior executives will get under the terms of the merger with BT. With the MCI people, BT has been forced to agree American-style incentives, enriching their beneficiaries beyond the dreams of avarice. As BT moves from being just another privatised utility to the status of leading global communications company, the American remuneration packages will migrate, rather in the way they did when Beecham merged with SmithKline of the US.

The second story concerns British Petroleum, where a long-term performance plan similar to that put in place for Sir Peter Bonfield has been extended to more than 300 senior executives in the group. In total some £32m of free shares are being paid out under a scheme originally set up in 1990. As a consequence, John Browne, the chief executive, sees his pay for last year rise from £635,000 to £2.47m, while the pay of Sir David Simon, the chairman, rises from £121,000 to £1.12m. In both cases the hike is caused by the free shares. The interesting thing about BP's pay bonanza is that it is somehow made to seem justifiable, not just because an astonishing turnround in BP's performance has been achieved in the past five years, but also because it has been spread among so many people. This is a clever trick, from which others will no doubt learn.

In the end, however, the issue of whether these very high rates of pay are deserved is a largely irrelevant one. The bidding up of executive salaries is a global phenomenon. Those who attempt to buck the trend will simply find they lose their best people to those who don't. Nor can the problem be properly addressed through taxation: high top rates of tax would almost certainly stifle entrepreneurial innovation and drive the best people offshore.

The worst mistake, then, that Sir Ronald could make in thinking about how he is going to follow Greenbury is to believe there is anything that can actually be done about rapidly inflating executive pay. Greed is like the sun and the rain: it is part of the human condition and part of the price we pay for a free market economy. In any case, the very high pay of top earners is not the main problem here; the more worrying phenomenon is the polarisation of pay between the well paid and the low paid, between the skilled and the unskilled. In an increasingly global, free trade economy, that too is something for which there are no obvious remedies.

So it looks as if Sir Ronald is going to have to content himself with merely enhancing disclosure and transparency in executive pay. Whatever he does, executives are going to find ways of continuing to pay themselves more and more. The best he can hope for is to improve disclosure to a level that adequately exposes those who obviously don't deserve it. As for how he persuades the public that it is entirely reasonable for executives to be bidding up their market worth in this way, if I had the answer to that, then I too would be an extremely wealthy man.

Profits of £290.2m cap 'excellent' year for United

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

United News & Media capped a hectic year in which it merged with Lord Hollick's MAI by announcing better-than-expected underlying profits despite disappointing figures from newspapers, magazines and MAI's original money-broking business. Lord Hollick, the Labour peer who has effectively sidelined United's chairman, Lord Stevens, since the two companies' marriage last February, described the combined group's first year as "excellent".

Profits of £290.2m were comfortably ahead of expectations, driven by strong performances from United's television interests, where it owns the Anglia and Meridian franchises and holds significant stakes in HTV and Yorkshire-Tyne Tees, and business services, its exhibitions to market research arm.

A 15 per cent rise in earnings per share to 40p (34.8p) helped the shares, up 30p to 770.5p, close at a record high since the merger. Forecasts of profits for the current year were pushed higher yesterday to a range between £310m and £335m.

Lord Hollick played down suggestions from the rivals it outbid last year for exhibitions group Blenheim that it had overpaid for the company. He said he was "delighted" by the £589m acquisition, which he said had a good portfolio of exhibitions and better-than-expected management. United won control of Blenheim by fighting off interest from Reed and Emap.

Reported pre-tax profits were dented by more than £200m of exceptional charges that included £62.4m to cover restructuring following the merger of United with MAI. The charge also took in £32m of reorganisation costs at the struggling Express newspaper titles, where the Sunday and daily titles were merged into a seven-day operation, £18.1m of integration costs at Blenheim and a £62.5m charge to cover the pre-launch costs of Channel 5, the new terrestrial channel which launches at the end of this month.

The effect of the exceptional charges was offset by a £149.6m profit on the disposal of businesses worth more than £300m, including legal publisher Tolley, sold to Reed, and the South Wales Argus group of local newspapers.

United owns 29 per cent of Channel 5, giving it the largest single holding in the station. The provision in its accounts implies a total pre-launch cost for the channel of more than £200m.

Despite the high costs of launching the channel, analysts remained positive about the station's prospects. One has put a present value of £330m on Channel 5, about a tenth of United's £3.6bn market value, and expects it to make annual profits of £185m by the end of its 10-year renewable licence period.

In national newspapers, which includes the *Star* as well as the *Express*, Lord Hollick said he was confident the group's relative decline compared with arch mid-market rival the *Daily Mail* had stabilised. He said a "good chunk" of an estimated £15m saving from a printing restructuring would be reinvested in promoting the *Express*.

According to Lord Hollick, United remains an "interested observer" in the unfolding stand-off between Granada's chairman, Gerry Robinson, and his opposite number at Yorkshire-Tyne Tees, Ward Thomas, regarding the price at which the widely expected takeover of Yorkshire by Granada should take place.

Delighted: Lord Hollick (left) and United's chief executive, David Arculus

Shield on a dipper over trial results

Magnus Grimond

Shares in Shield Diagnostics, a small Dundee-based biotechnology company, ended a heart-stopping 600 per cent climb over the last two months with a big dipper ride yesterday.

Soaring to a new all-time high of 919p in the morning, up 114p from Thursday's close, they then hurtled back down to 507.5p on news that US trials of a new test for heart attacks had hit the buffers.

But the bulls who have behind the shares' amazing rise from 130p since the end of January recovered their nerve and late buying left the shares down just 137.5p on the day at 667.5p.

With around 7 per cent of the company's share capital traded yesterday, the Stock Exchange was understood to be investigating the "unusual" movements in the price. David Evans, Shield's finance director, said the Exchange had "made due inquiry" after several one-day price changes of more than 10 per cent since the beginning of February.

The crash in the shares came after Shield announced that key trials in Houston, Texas, based on 700 patients who had been involved in a long-running government programme had been nullified by the mishandling of some samples dating back to 1986.

The trial, alongside another in London's St Bartholomew's Hospital, is testing whether Shield's Activated Factor Twelve accurately predicts heart attacks.

The recent soaring share price has been fuelled by a positive report on the trials – issued by the company earlier this year. But Mr Evans said precipitate – "gunge" – had been discovered in the samples, making them statistically invalid as a basis for the trial.

The company said it would be going back to those in charge of the trial to see if later data could be substituted, but he said Shield would go ahead with a briefing to investors on 24 March.

Analysts have suggested the market for the product could match the 500m cholesterol test kits sold world-wide every year, but others are highly sceptical. One said: "I think its a classic stock market ramp. A small biotech company with great development plans and you ramp it to hell and back."

Inflation 'nirvana' steadies Wall Street

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Shares on Wall Street partly reversed Thursday's dive after new figures showed the American economy delivering strong growth and falling inflation.

By mid-morning the Dow Jones index was nearly 60 points higher at 6,938.16. The buoyant start helped London's FTSE-100 index end nearly 27 points higher at 4,424.3.

With investors using every fresh set of statistics to try to predict whether Alan Greenspan, the Fed chairman, will decide to raise interest rates later this month, further ups and downs in share and bond prices look inevitable.

"The markets are living in fear. They are looking out for the next possible piece of bad news," warned Ian Harwood, international economist at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson.

The Federal Reserve reported yesterday that industrial output had climbed 0.5 per cent last month after a 0.1 per cent decline in January. The capacity utilisation rate in industry edge up to 83.3 per cent.

Separate figures showed that prices charged by manufacturers at the factory gate nevertheless fell by 0.4 per cent last month, taking their annual inflation rate down from 2.5 per cent to 2.2 per cent. Even though much of the drop was due to falling food and energy prices, the core rate of producer price inflation declined to 0.5 per cent.

This happy combination – described as "nirvana" by one analyst – followed news on Thursday of a surge in retail spending in the first two months of the year, and figures last week showing a leap of 339,000 in employment in February.

The pessimists who expect Mr Greenspan to opt for a quarter-point rise in borrowing costs after the Fed's 25 March meeting focus on the strength of the economy combined with the Fed chairman's recent warning that he will take pre-emptive action against future inflation if necessary.

There was some evidence in yesterday's figures of higher prices in the pipeline. On the other hand the optimists point to the absence of any signs of inflation on the immediate horizon. This means February's consumer price figures next week, will be the next focus for the financial markets' angst.

Lockheed heads bid for air traffic control centre

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Lockheed Martin, the giant US defence contractor, heads a consortium that became the preferred bidder to build the £230m Scottish air traffic control centre, it was announced yesterday. Responsible for controlling all air traffic travelling over Scotland and the north of England, the new centre should come into service in 2002 and will replace the existing one at Prestwick.

The project, being funded under the private finance initiative, will, the consortium claims, net the private firms £600m over 25 years. The other main member in the Sky Solutions consortium is the Bovis building company.

"The new Scottish centre will increase capacity, enhance efficiency and maintain the highest standards of safety," said Derek McLauchlan, chief executive of National Air Traffic Services, which let the contract.

The centre is urgently needed to handle the sharp rise in air traffic forecast by the Civil Aviation Authority, the Government's air regulator. "Over the next 10 years, air traffic is forecast to increase by 30 per cent and up to 50 per cent by the year 2015," Mr McLauchlan said.

Sir George Young, Secretary of State for Transport, will have to approve the deal. It may, however, never be signed. NATS , the arm of the CAA which serves aircraft in Britain across the Atlantic and half-way across the Channel, was forced to sign the PFI deal to get to build a new centre.

However, if NATS is sold to the private sector, it has an option to pull out of the contract and build the Prestwick centre itself. It is increasingly likely that NATS will be sold – as the £600m it would bring in is urgently required by the Treasury. The Conservatives have declared their intention to privatise the service and Labour has said it cannot be ruled out.

Insiders point out that the cost of using the PFI will mean that the centre will mean that the cost is nearly 200 per cent more than original forecasts.

IN BRIEF

• **British Airways** yesterday announced plans for expansion at Gatwick involving 700 new cabin crew jobs and the transfer of its Latin American routes to Gatwick from Heathrow. The expansion means that by April BA will fly to more destinations from Gatwick than Heathrow. BA employs 7,000 staff at Gatwick. The routes being shifted to Gatwick are those to Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela.

• **Tobacco shares were hit** after a US court ruling increased the likelihood that the first of billions of dollars of claims to recoup the public cost of smoking-related diseases will come to trial in June. BAT Industries, whose Brown & Williamson subsidiary is one of the defendants in the case, saw its shares slide 31p before recovering to end 14.5p down at 540p. Imperial Tobacco was off 5.5p early on, but finished just 0.5p off at 438p. The falls came after the Mississippi Supreme Court threw out an attempt by Governor Kirk Fordice and the industry to derail a $940m (£588m) claim for the costs of tobacco-related diseases to the public Medicaid medical insurance scheme. The decision means the state attorney-general, Mike "Flashbulb" Moore, can now test the claim in a state court in June.

• **Wickes, the troubled DIY group**, yesterday drew a line under last year's problems when it announced reduced losses and the departure of two non-executive directors. Reporting losses of £55.7m, compared to the previous year's £279m, Wickes said 66-year-old Sanford Sigaloff, a close associate of Henry Sweetbaum, the former chairman, was stepping down. Also departing is Robert Burrow, a non-executive director. The departures mean Michael von Brentano, who replaced Mr Sweetbaum as chairman and oversaw the investigation into the profits overstatement, is the sole survivor of the old Wickes board.

• **Transport Secretary George Young** said Associated British Ports had been made the preferred bidder for Ipswich Port. The £24.4m sale is expected to be completed shortly. After payment of the 50 per cent sale levy to the Government, privatisation costs and retention of the balance the port would be valued at £12m, ABP said.

• **Edinburgh Fund Managers** has entered into a conditional agreement to buy back 2.645 million of its own shares at 565p each from British Investment Trust. BIT has entered into a conditional placing agreement with HSBC James Capel and Panmure Gordon to sell 7.53 million shares in Edinburgh Fund Managers at the same price.

• **St James Beach Hotels** is in discussions with Barbados Shipping & Trading which could lead to the acquisition of a majority shareholding in Almond Resorts, a listed company in Barbados which owns Almond Beach Village and Almond Beach Club.

• **Babcock International** said its chief executive, Nick Salmon, had accepted the post of managing director of the power generation division at GEC Alsthom. Mr Salmon will leave at the end of May and John Parker will temporarily assume his role.

Railtrack director quits with £250,000 pay-off after one year

Michael Harrison

A senior Railtrack director yesterday quit the company unexpectedly with a pay-off which is expected to be in the region of £250,000.

The company said Michael Howell, who had been in the post of commercial director for a year, had resigned. The Railtrack chairman, Sir Bob Horton, said his departure was in both parties' interests.

Mr Howell, 49, joined Railtrack after a career in the private sector which included long spells in the US. His job was to develop the company's relationships with train operating companies and freight companies. But his entrepreneurial style is not thought to have been suited to Railtrack, which operates in a heavily regulated environment where its income and charges are fixed.

Before joining Railtrack, Mr Howell worked for General Electric and Cummins Engines in the US, returning four years ago to take up a post with Arlington, the capital fund managers, before being recruited to the railway.

Railtrack said his business style did not fit easily with the constraints it operated under. But it denied rumours Mr Howell had fallen out with his chief executive, John Edmonds, over a deal with the freight train operator English, Welsh and Scottish Railway over access charges for new freight business.

"There was no big issue and there was no row. It was just one of those things that did not work out," a source said.

Mr Howell was paid £150,000 and was on a two-year contract. He would have been entitled to bonuses under Railtrack's incentive scheme had he stayed.

BZW censured over Northern bid affair

Michael Harrison

BZW, the investment bank, was yesterday censured by the Takeover Panel for failing to disclose the existence of a £250,000 performance fee during its defence of Northern Electric against the hostile bid from CalEnergy last year.

The Panel said it accepted that BZW had not deliberately concealed the fee but said nevertheless that it should have disclosed it.

The existence of the fee came to light in the dying days of the bid, shortly after BZW and Schroders went into the market and bought a 2.6 per cent stake in Northern in an attempt to thwart the £782m takeover.

CalEnergy's advisers immediately complained to the Panel, which took the unusual step of extending the bid, thus allowing CalEnergy to receive enough acceptances from shareholders.

Had the bid closed normally at 60 days then Northern would have escaped takeover by a whisker, with the aid of the shares bought by its advisers.

The Panel executive said it believed there had been "no deliberate concealment" of the fee but criticised BZW for "failing to disclose all relevant facts".

In the event the fee was never paid. The episode provoked a heated debate about whether advisers should be allowed to buy stakes in companies they are defending – a practice which is outlawed in the US.

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Legal & General Investment Management

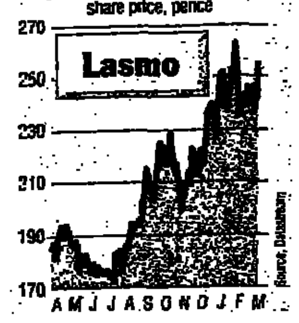
market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100	
4424.3	+26.6
FTSE 250	
4707.8	-12.4
FTSE 350	
2184.4	+9.2
SEAQ VOLUME	
917.1m shares,	
56,490 bargains	
Gilts Index	
n/a	n/a

Share spotlight

share price, pence



Pakistani strike sends Lasmo shares gushing ahead

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

Lasmo, the oil group which distinguished itself by fighting off the hostile advances of **Enterprise Oil**, gushed 17.5p to 258.5p at one time as a leading securities house appeared intent on buying every share in sight.

Stories flowed that Lasmo was set to collect another takeover bid: there was also intense speculation about a strike in Pakistan.

The price ended at 256.5p with SEAQ putting volume at 5.2 million shares. ABN Amro Hoare Govett appeared to be the main buyer.

The suspicion Lasmo is a takeover target has been evident for months. Few expect Enterprise, after the bloody nose it received last time, to venture forth with a new offer; it is widely accepted the revitalised group will swoop in another direction.

But there is a strong feeling Lasmo could be in the sights of a transatlantic predator. US and Canadian oil groups have displayed a tendency to flex their corporate muscles and there is no doubt Lasmo would be a significant capture for a string of groups.

The possibility Lasmo, perhaps glancing anxiously over its corporate shoulder, could emerge as the attacker also occupies stock market minds. Although Enterprise, as it would, has played down this week's talk it is about to roll out a bid a number of its suggested targets have shown remarkable resilience.

British Borneo Petroleum Syndicate gained 26.5p to 1,451.5p and **Cairn Energy**, figures next week, rose 6.5p to 583p with some pondering a Lasmo strike.

The Pakistan hit was said to be a massive gas find. A vast gas reservoir was said to have been discovered at Lasmo's Bhit-2 well, not far from Karachi. Drilling has been completed and Lasmo is busy evaluating the findings. It hopes to be able to make a judgement in the near future.

Enterprise continued its heady run, gaining a further 7.5p to 659.5p, and **Dana Petroleum**, on its strengthening ties with the former Soviet Union, put on a further 1.5p to 25p.

The rest of the market spent the session under the shadow of New York. Thursday's 160.48-point slump by the Dow Jones Average sent Footsie down 46.7 points in early trading.

But the fall was whittled away and when New York opened with a burst of confidence Footsie took fresh heart, ending up 26.6 points at 4,424.3.

Fears of higher interest rates, possibly next week, were behind Thursday's US turmoil. It is generally accepted that transatlantic rates will be lifted although any increase could be some weeks away.

BG, once British Gas, was busily traded with some even sniffing takeover action. The price gained 2p to 172p. **Centrica**, British Gas's former distribution arm, also enjoyed an active session, ending little changed at 60.5p.

Stagecoach, the buses and trains group, was shunted 24p lower to 732.5p as its chaotic South West Trains operation suffered humiliating treatment from the railway's regulator.

Shield Diagnostic was another under pressure on disappointment that the much-vaunted Houston set of trails into its heart disease detection system may be unproductive because of spoilt samples. The company's treatment has already enjoyed successful tests in this country. Shield is pressing ahead with a City presentation later this month.

The shares in frantic late trading crashed from a 919p peak to 507.5p, before rallying to 667.5p, off 137.5p. But some drugs were on a high. **Cantab Pharmaceuticals** jumped 127.5p to 1,020p ahead of results due next week and **Biocompatibles International** bounced 62.5p to 1,237.5p.

Ransomes, the lawnmower group, gave up 18p to 32p following a profit warning.

Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Television steadied at 1,167.5p after **Granada**'s sudden display of indifference; Granada shaded 2.5p to 954p.

United News & Media rose 30p to 770.5p on its results.

J Sainsbury gained 11.5p to 327.5p on suggestions of a sales recovery and **Reckitt & Colman** added 40.5p to 327.5p as Unilever bid hopes resurfaced.

General Electric Co flicked 11.5p higher to 394.5p on its expected £2bn submarine order. **BAT Industries** drooped 14.5p to 540p on the latest twist in the US litigation serial.

Insurance brokers had one of their more fascinating sessions with the sector dominated once again by takeover talk. The latest US broking merger has reawakened thoughts that it cannot be long before **Willis Corroon**, up 3.5p to 160.5p, merges with its old rival **Sedgwick**, 2.5p higher at 129p.

Taking Stock

❐ Fairbriar, the building group where Bank of Scotland *sits on* 47.3 per cent of the capital as a legacy of past disasters, climbed 6p to 34.5p, making an 11.5p gain *this week*. It returned to the black in the first half of last year with a £1.4m profit and year's figures should be out soon. But stories of a Kent undertaking are the main spur. It is rumoured that Fairbriar has a big development in the pipeline, probably with Rank.

❐ Card Clear, the credit card protection group, edged forward 0.5p to 43.5p as Crédit Lyonnais Laing said buy, suggesting an initial target of 50p. It sees CC producing £2.2m this year and £3.3m next.

❐ Motion Media, suspended on Ofex for a cash call, returned at 155p, off 35p.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.
Other details: r Ex rights x Ex-dividend a Ex all u Unlisted Securities Market s Suspended pp Partly Paid pm Nil Paid Shares. ‡ AIM Stock. Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0891 123 335, and when prompted to do, so enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 – Real-time	00	Sterling Rates	04	Privatisation Issues	38
UK Stock Market Report	01	Bullion Report	05	Water Shares	39
UK Company News	02	Wall St Report	20	Electricity Shares	40
Foreign Exchange	03	Tokyo Market	21	High Street Banks	41

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Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000
BAT Inds	3580000	Renold Intl	1460000	General Elec.	1080000	ASDA Group	780000
RTZ	3440000	Ryl & Sun Alice	1350000	BT	1020000	National Grid	720000
BG	3000000	NatWest Bank	1320000	MFI	980000	Marks & Spencer	710000
Centrica	2380000	British Steel	1200000	Vodafone	910000	Sainsbury	710000
BTR	2120000	Lloyds TSB	1140000	BP	880000	Shell Transport	680000

FTSE 100 index hour by hour

Open 4351.2 down 46.5	11.00 4369.7 down 28.0	14.00 4388.1 down 9.6
09.00 4365.4 down 32.3	12.00 4370.7 down 27.0	15.00 4395.2 down 2.5
10.00 4375.7 down 22.0	13.00 4374.5 down 23.2	16.00 4413.9 up 16.2
		Close 4424.3 up 26.6

Share prices (1996/97 High, Low, Stock, Price, Chg, Yld, P/E, Index Code)

Alcoholic Beverages [illegible]

Banks, Merchant [illegible]

Banks, Retail [illegible]

Breweries, Pubs & Rest [illegible]

Building/Construction [illegible]

Building Materials [illegible]

Chemicals [illegible]

Distributors [illegible]

Diversified Industrials [illegible]

Electricity [illegible]

Electronics [illegible]

Engineering [illegible]

Engineering Vehicles [illegible]

Extractive Industries [illegible]

Food Manufacturers [illegible]

Gas Distribution [illegible]

Health Care [illegible]

Household Goods [illegible]

Insurance [illegible]

Internationals [illegible]

Investment Companies [illegible]

Investment Trusts [illegible]

Leisure & Hotels [illegible]

Life Assurance [illegible]

Media [illegible]

Oil Exploration [illegible]

Oil, Integrated [illegible]

Other Financial [illegible]

Pharmaceuticals [illegible]

Printing & Paper [illegible]

Property [illegible]

Retailers, Food [illegible]

Retailers, General [illegible]

Support Services [illegible]

Telecommunications [illegible]

Textiles & Apparel [illegible]

Tobaccos [illegible]

Transport [illegible]

Water [illegible]

Government Securities

Index-linked [illegible]

Shorts [illegible]

Undated [illegible]

Mediums [illegible]

Longs [illegible]

Rights Issues

[illegible]

Recent Issues

[illegible]

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unit trusts

UK GROWTH & INCOME

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Fleming Select UK Income	1269	1000	88.7	5837	1361	1
Fleming United Charities	382	500	6.8	376.0	1248	2
Lawrence Keen Income & Growth	1065		16.1	8281	1367	3
Abbey General	467	1000	122.1	3159	1078	120
ABN AMRO Pembroke Balanced	1063	1000	8.1	24348	1054	126
AES UK General	892	1000	14.8	18600	1204	9
Allied Dunbar Accumulator	872	2000	1278.4	1860	1125	87
Allied Dunbar Asset Value	1142	2000	246.6	758.30	1148	53
Allied Dunbar Balanced	1186	2000	183.9	895.70	1124	71
Allied Dunbar Growth & Income	1142	2000	73.8	398.20	1144	59
AXA E&L General Acc	389	1000	151.7	784.50	1118	98
AXA E&L General Inc	389	1000	151.7	650.00	1122	92
AXA E&L UK Growth Inc	1081	1000	483.5	352.50	1141	64
Bank of Ireland Br Equity Gth	488	1000	6.4	138.1	1084	119
Barclays Uni 500	288	500	416.6	588.8	1082	127
Barclays Uni Exempt	471	500	22.1	9809	1131	77
Barclays Uni General	659	500	965.2	2602	1122	93
Barclays Uni Growth & Income	704	5000	49.7	493.3	1148	29
Barclays Uni Trustee	1281	500	207.2	2883	1147	61
Baring Portfolio Inc	1168	1000	64.8	1899	1081	118
Britannia UK General Inc	1184	1000	85.0	115.40	1193	14
Carlile Growth	475	500	357.0	2039	1145	56
Capel-Cure Income & Growth Inc	975	500	88.7	542.00	1125	88
Cazenove UK Equity	1189	2500	333	11407	1118	99
City Financial J Siddall I & G	1081	500	1.1	84.78	1084	128
City Financial Shaw Utilities	396	2000	2.1	88.34	1011	129
Cler Med General Equity	1084	1000	302.8	122.80	1149	45
Colonial Capital	589	1000	4.1	94.95	1132	75
Consistent UT	288	1000	27.1	4082	1073	122
Credit Suisse Growth Port Inc	788	1000	48.4	115.00	1091	117
CU PPT UK & General Inc	1266	500	105.2	113.48	1159	25
CU Quilter Fund Inc	172	500	8.9	178.54	1106	109
Eagle Star UK Balanced Inc	985	1000	48.7	2008	1154	43
Edinburgh Growth & Income	138	500	47.9	331.3	1126	86
Edinburgh UK Income & Growth	586	1000	4.9	2850	1119	94
Equitable Pelican	189	500	432.9	166.86	1179	19
F&C UK Exempt Acc	1186	5000	12.1	271.8	1088	116
Family Asset	181	1000	36.8	111.50	1184	31
Fidelity Growth & Income	1279	1000	81.3	2086	1178	20
Five Arrows Major UK Companies	786	500	33.2	142.34	1202	10
Framlington Income & Growth	1271	500	78.7	2639	1114	102
Friends Prov Equity	270	1000	3597	536.60	1145	55
GA GANDA	986	1000	71.9	3473	1178	21
GAM UK Diversified Acc	880	10000	48.5	289.33	1147	52
Gartmore UK Equity Income	272	1000	83.8	166.88	1122	91
Gartmore UK Index	288	2500	246.6	18807	1230	6
GEM Dolphin UK & General	788	1000	22	59.86	1132	74
Govett FTSE Mid 250 Index	882	3000	10.2	104.88	1078	121
Guardian Guardhill	1087	500	208.4	783.1	1146	55
Hambros Model Portfolio	388	1000	21.5	278.10	1141	65
Henderson Ex Income & Growth	580	2000	18.5	350.54	1199	11
Henderson Income & Growth	589	1000	168.7	262.20	1109	107
Hill Samuel British	1188	500	77.5	143.05	1168	16
Hill Samuel Income & Growth	183	500	126.4	168.19	1156	70
HSBC Footsie Fund	285	1000	55.9	73.43	1242	4
HSBC UK Index	380	1000	178.5	187.4	1222	7
INVESCO Income & Growth	789	1000	181.0	5846	1187	15
Lazard UK Income & Growth	471	1000	62.1	6920	1150	46
Legal & General UK Index	882	1000	508.6	85.76	1170	23
Legal & General UK Stockmkt Acc	580	2000	18.1	80.50	1241	5
Lincoln Growth	782	500	138.2	66.68	1130	78
Lincoln Income	582	500	140.3	77.26	1133	73
Lloyds Bank Balanced Acc	1085	1000	200.1	114.68	1142	60
Lloyds Bank FTSE 100	1184	1000	48.9	145.00	1167	28
Lloyds Bank Income Acc	1070	1000	228.1	1657.0	1122	90
Lloyds Bank UK Equity Income	1189	50000	35.2	152.80	1142	60
London & Manchester General	1183	500	44.2	128.51	1141	63
M&G General	451	500	489.6	7820	1113	103
M&G Midland & General	556	500	285.8	6980	1085	125
M&G Pension Exempt	587	250	60.4	1289.9	1159	38
M&G Second General	458	500	351.9	8170	1089	123
M&G Trustee	587	500	58.1	4880	1101	112
Maldon General	387	5000	10.2	165.8	1140	67
Marks & Spencer UK Sel Pf Acc	1089	1000	121.9	2268	1162	34
Mayflower British Leaders	270	500	8.8	49.40	1085	124
Mayflower Higher Income	288	1000	1.4	188.98	1098	113
Mayflower Income	270	500	8.4	357.55	1118	100
Mercury General	387	1000	689.0	684.3	1117	95
Mercury UK Equity	1071	50000	250.3	7828	1133	72
MGM UK Growth	1182	1000	138.0	543.45	1185	30
Morgan Grenfell UK Ind Trk Acc	1088	1000	87.5	2848	1145	57
Morgan Grenfell UK Ind Trk Inc	1088	1000	87.5	2860	1146	54
Mutuals Stockmarket Gth	1085	2000	88.2	1279	1182	33
NatWest UK General Acc	183	1000	91.1	8884	1118	96
Newton Foundation	1088	1000	14.9	138.73	1128	80
Newton Income	585	1000	3747	314.03	1154	42
NFU Avon Equity	585	500	37.3	174.19	1138	68
Norwich UK Equity	1174	500	587.5	1972.8	1170	24
Norwich UK Equity Income	1188	500	115.2	1777.9	1157	38
Norwich UK Index Tracking	1089	5000	120.0	198.84	1150	47
NPI UK Acc	1189	500	287.8	1085.7	1156	39
OM Temple Equity Inc	1288	500	3.0	57.72	1112	104
Pearl Equity	1069	1000	258.3	3240	1118	97
Pearl Income	871	1000	171.5	3142	1115	101
Pearl UK Income	589	1000	483.5	84.81	1092	114
Pearl UK International 25	889	1000	91.2	108.9	1081	115
Perpetual Income	879	500	2754	5882	1187	29
Pilgrim UK Income & Growth	780	1000	5.4	8548	1141	62
PM Income & Growth	1285	500	25.1	1882	1103	111
Prolific UK Blue Chip	891	500	136.9	105.2	1189	12
Prudential Equity	889	1000	5884	1048.1	1129	80
Reliance British Life	480	100	115.8	3882	1111	105
Royal Life UK Index Tracking	888	2000	185.7	2359	1186	82
Save & Prosper Premier Equ Inc	1159	1000	37.9	4893	1172	22
Save & Prosper UK Growth & Inc	887	1000	504.8	3827	1183	32
Schroder UK Equity Inc	1169	1000	1132.2	358.77	1165	40
Schroder UK Index Acc Inst	786	10000	320.2	278.05	1167	37
Scot Amicable Equity Income	589	1000	23.7	6893	1110	106
Scot Equitable High Income Inc	587	500	18.0	4878	1122	89
Scot Equitable UK Blue Chip Acc	1189	500	13.9	5727	1164	41
Scot Equitable UK General Acc	885	500	254.1	8857	1132	76
Scot Life UK Equity Nelson	384	250	631.4	5339	1141	61
Scot Mutual Income Plus Acc	1087	500	7.0	141.3	1136	69
Scot Mutual UK Equity Acc	1084	500	176.5	3835	1152	46
Scot Widows Equity Acc	881	500	421.9	8107	1125	85
Scot Widows UK High Income	288	500	369.8	3833	1149	48
Sovereign FTSE 100	784	500	7.8	6808	1179	18
Standard Income Advantage Inc	282	2000	29.7	40.37	1162	35
Standard Life UK Equ Gen Inc	1082	1000	1141.0	6738	1127	81
Stewart Ivory British	274	500	41.1	1485.7	1128	84
Sun Life UK Income Acc	885	1000	3.4	118.60	1187	27
Sun Life/Canada UK Gth Acc	672	500	412.6	84.84	1103	110
Sun Life/Canada UK Income	985	1000	22.4	5840	1107	108
TSB General	188	500	300.9	415.18	1153	44
TSB Income	777	500	168.7	440.76	1140	66
TU British	781	50	123.2	481.17	1198	13
Virgin UK Index Tracking	395	1000	39.8	144.74	1211	8
Wesleyan Growth	1106	2000	3.5	129.41	1185	17
Woolwich UK Stockmarket	181	500	509.7	120.10	1128	79

UK GROWTH

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Johnson Fry Slater Growth	1187	1000	44.6	222.59	1848	1
Mercury Recovery	381	1000	128.8	545.9	1586	2
Hill Samuel Special Situations	879	500	18.3	258.05	1871	3
Abbey Assets & Earnings	1189	1000	52.3	3654	1089	123
Abbey Ethical	987	1000	36.3	8858	1120	90
Abbey National NSP UK Growth	1102	500	73.9	1357	1135	75
ABN AMRO Pembroke UK Growth	1288	1000	43.0	278.67	1081	126
Abtrust UK Growth	885	500	33.1	6859	1189	57
Allchurches Amity Inc	288	500	39.4	105.45	1122	89
Allied Dunbar Capital	1142	2000	237.8	602.50	1128	78
Allied Dunbar Classic Earnings	486	2000	239.0	498.30	1113	104
Allied Dunbar Recovery	770	2000	62.8	187.50	1087	122
Allied Dunbar UK Special Sits	1142	2000	34.9	888.80	1114	99
AXA E&L Britain Excellence	787	1000	36.3	107.40	1134	76
Bank of Ireland Capital Growth	1084	1000	3.5	1845	1118	98
Barclays Uni Capital	1057	500	385.9	1885	1144	69
Barclays Uni Growth Acc	270	500	47.7	4087	1145	62
Barclays Uni Leisure	284	500	34.4	201.7	1084	119
Barclays Uni Recovery	887	500	57.4	8821	1110	108
Barclays Uni Special Sits	1172	1000	64.0	4784	1159	17
Baring UK Growth	1187	1000	25.4	1285	1230	8
Britannia Balanced Growth Inc	1184	500	217.0	171.87	1196	20
BWD Rensburg Capital	1289	1000	21.4	1007	1188	51
BWD Equity Growth	186	500	5.2	1084.3	1145	88
Carlile General Dis	871	2000	164.0	2673	1104	113
Capel-Cure Growth Inc	1289	500	27.8	650.50	1162	32
Capel-Cure Special Sits Inc	371	500	18.2	148.70	1182	49
Cavendish Opportunities	288	5000	4.5	2453	1080	127
CIS UK Growth	889	500	646.0	2445	1172	42
City Financial Assets	488	100	2.4	89.48	1091	121
City Financial Finsbury Hse Cap	279	500	3.5	592.15	1022	130
Cler Med Portfolio Growth	586	1000	88.4	74.83	1118	84
Cler Med Special Situations	1288	1000	40.3	54.84	1085	124
Colonial Top 50	1085	1000	8.5	6508	1154	38
Credit Suisse Fellowship Inc	788	1000	49.1	128.10	1146	65
CU PPT UK Growth	484	500	2.4	229.00	1222	10
Eagle Star Environmental Opps	889	1000	17.5	1182	1111	107
Eagle Star UK Growth Acc	885	1000	294.5	3598	1148	61
Equitable Special Situations	1284	500	70.1	105.28	1082	129
Exeter Capital Growth	488	1000	7.7	119.28	1344	7
Fidelity Recovery	1187	1000	197.3	71.84	1187	28
Fidelity Special Situations	1879	1000	722.6	8825	1164	48
Fidelity UK Growth	885	1000	489.2	1440	1152	59
Fleming Growth Acc	1187	500	27	51.88	1170	43
Framlington UK Growth Acc	1282	500	21.5	84.58	1146	63
Friends Prov Stewardship	884	1000	376.1	544.10	1158	52
Friends Prov UK Focus	1182	1000	43.6	4880	1114	103
Friends Prov UK Growth	7189	1000	300.9	228.30	1155	78
Gartmore British Growth	987	1000	289.9	6812	1082	130
Gartmore PS UK Equity	688	10000	32.2	391.50	1197	18
Govett British Growth	887	1000	4.4	8275	1112	105
Govett UK Equity Gains	383	500	108.5	392.30	1119	83
GT UK Growth Inc	288	500	18.7	2159	1085	132
GT UK Special Situations	388	500	8.8	188.2	1118	101
Guardian Growth Equity	683	500	82.8	5285	1187	19
Gulfmere Flight Recovery	379	500	4.8	474.50	1247	6
Henderson Best of Breed	1187	1000	88.1	86.42	1135	74
Henderson UK Enterprise Inc	589	1000	28.6	413.89	1049	131
Henry Cooke Advent Growth	1081	500	14.8	211.20	1105	112
Henry Cooke Advent Recovery	974	500	3.9	280.20	1123	85
Hill Samuel Capital	183	500	1014.8	280.0	1094	115
Hill Samuel Enterprise Growth	684	500	48.7	488.71	1183	47
HSBC Tiele Index	1081	1000	41.8	1433	1153	57
HSBC UK Growth	776	1000	35.6	8804	1111	106
INVESCO Rupert Childrens	488	50	30.7	1205.0	1175	38
INVESCO UK Growth	888	1000	230.4	83.19	1173	41
Johnson Fry Sector Value Gth	1085	1000	4.8	1238.0	1156	55
Jupiter UK Growth	388	500	79.2	102.84	1209	13
Kleinwort Benson UK Equity Gth	1171	500	33.0	8431	1247	8
Lawrence Keen Baer Recovery	684	2000	6.2	8859	1189	29
Lazard UK Capital	471	1000	55.9	3336	1139	71
Legal & General Equity Dis	571	1000	2887	8482.0	1180	30
Legal & General UK Recovery	388	1000	133.4	1285.0	1158	12
Lincoln Recovery	688	500	14.0	1088	1128	79
Lincoln UK Capital Growth	975	500	38.3	1822	1126	82
Lloyds Bank UK Equity Growth	1189	50000	23.4	183.20	1141	70
Lloyds Bank UK Growth Acc	588	1000	54.2	157.80	1157	54
M&G Capital	1271	500	181.8	1107.3	1103	114
M&G Compound Growth	1088	500	103.5	1411.6	1120	92
M&G Recovery Acc	589	500	1441.2	9200	1051	130
Martin Currie UK Growth	388	1000	17.3	144.8	1178	35
Mercury British Blue Chip Acc	587	1000	235.0	1458	1153	59
Metropolitan UK Growth Acc	487	1000	36.5	129.98	1129	77
MGM Special Situations Growth	987	1000	18.8	39.08	1211	12
Midland British Acc	588	1000	222.7	1480	1173	34
Morgan Grenfell UK Growth Inc	286	1000	75.8	1507	1166	45
Murray UK Growth	388	500	4.3	131.20	1174	40
NatWest UK Equity Growth	189	1000	180.2	8001	1118	100
NatWest UK Equity Growth Acc	189	1000	180.2	8886	1117	97
Newton Growth Inc	1182	1000	82.4	188.82	1087	117
Norwich UK Equity Growth	589	500	59.5	1279.7	1114	102
NPI UK Spec Opps Acc	591	500	32.9	158.78	1175	39
OM AMR British Growth Inc	885	500	0.9	128.80	1078	126
OM Henley Growth	1087	500	1.4	138.80	1207	14
Pearl Growth	871	1000	38.5	208.8	1120	91
Perpetual UK Exempt	1081	1000	39.7	479.47	1184	31
Perpetual UK Growth	887	1000	685.3	1510.8	1152	60
PM Equity Growth	1285	500	35.7	2809	1108	110
Pilcrow Trust	1289	1000	13.5	187.02	1125	84
Prolific Recovery	881	500	48.0	104.7	1180	40
Prolific Special Situations	282	250	128.3	177.3	1180	34
Prudential Special Situations	1185	2000	35.4	1408.1	1128	111
Prudential UK Growth	185	1000	465.0	1750.4	1145	67
Refuge UK Equity	484	500	275.9	4821	1178	35
Royal Life Equity Growth	978	500	22.7	4654	1117	98
Royal London Special Sits	1088	2000	37.8	3104	1177	37
Royal London UK Growth	881	2000	155.8	1242	1185	33
Sanwa UK Growth	1181	500	28.2	104.85	1097	116
Save & Prosper Premier Equ Gth	1182	1000	25.3	1097	1308	15
Save & Prosper UK Equity Gth	882	1000	141.5	9811	1181	33
Schroder Recovery Inst	670	10000	605.1	2874.7	1157	53
Schroder UK Enterprise Acc	788	1000	1109.8	480.40	1124	87
Scot Amicable Equity	1188	1000	802.5	8988	1118	95
Scot Amicable Equity Strategy	1189	1000	28.3	105.41	1124	85
Scot Equitable Ethical Inc	489	500	32.4	4932	1185	30
Scot Mutual Select Opps Acc	1289	500	20.6	1189	1128	83
Scot Widows UK Spec Sits Acc	1089	1000	83.5	181.4	1185	21
Smith & Williamson Growth	587	500	10.2	1875	1127	81
Sovereign Ethical	589	500	16.8	95.51	1127	80
Sovereign UK Growth	587	500	98.2	9082	1085	125
St James UK & General Prog Acc	1089	1500	89.7	341.4	1124	88
Standard Life UK Eq Growth Acc	588	1000	34.4	1232	1241	8
Sun Alliance Equity	470	500	293.5	1272.0	1148	66
Sun Alliance UK Leading Cos	582	500	40.8	8441	1188	28
Sun Life UK Growth Acc	885	1000	82.3	1118.0	1147	60
Thornton Eurotel Inc	788	2500	7.8	788.40	1185	22
Thornton UK Blue Chip Inc	384	500	1.7	81.44	1181	23
Thornton UK Growth Inc	582	500	82.7	780.70	1202	16
Thornton UK Mid-Cap Inc	280	500	14.8	394.81	1213	11
TSB Balanced Growth Acc	1086	500	135.2	177.39	1169	44
TSB Environmental Inv Acc	889	500	18.5	110.35	1248	4
TSB Selected Opportunities	482	500	112.5	192.67	1102	115
United Friendly UK Equity Gth	1089	1000	45.5	121.42	1110	109

UK EQUITY INCOME

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Jupiter Income	787	500	388.7	288.94	1280	1
BWD UK Equity Income	1085	500	2.8	108.33	1280	2
M&G Dividend	380	25	888.5	882.6	1287	3
Abbey Dividend & Growth	1289	1000	110.5	78.93	1103	85
Abbey High Income Equity	873	1000	145.3	2150	1112	82
Abbey National Equity Income	271	500	222.5	148.9	1124	42
ABN AMRO Pembroke Equity Inc	1184	1000	3.7	145.13	1084	72
Abtrust Extra Income	885	500	45.8	55.89	1129	48
Allchurches Income Builder Inc	1188	500	8.0	80.48	1112	57
Allied Dunbar Equity Income	189	2000	342.2	300.70	1138	39
Allied Dunbar High Income	184	2000	483.5	537.00	1148	33
Allied Dunbar High Yield	774	2000	205.8	390.00	1142	35
AXA E&L High Income Inc	1081	1000	624.0	8190.0	1114	61
Baillie Gifford Income	1084	500	9.1	4365	1080	71
Barclays Uni Extra Income	472	500	359.7	1825	1126	46
Barclays Uni Income	1084	500	604.5	6814	1104	65
Baring Equity Income	1285	1000	10.2	1185	1184	16
Britannia High Yield Inc	1285	500	164.6	6505	1154	24
Carlile High Income	1083	500	47.7	2588	1127	51
Capel-Cure High Yield Inc Ex	588	2500	15.7	170.40	1180	19
Cler Med Equity High Inc Inc	1084	1000	684.9	108.41	1120	56
Credit Suisse Income Inc	776	1000	167.9	320.80	1107	64
CU PPT Equity Income Inc	285	500	38.6	233.48	1174	11
Eagle Star UK High Income Inc	1085	1000	192.9	2082	1158	22
Edinburgh Equity Income	284	500	25.8	161.9	1102	67
Ely Place L&C Income	878	250	7.5	573.50	1072	74
Equitable High Income	1284	500	389.4	168.52	1120	55
Exeter High Income	488	1000	74.8	48.11	1158	23
Fidelity Income Plus	1180	1000	78.4	1328	1179	13
Five Arrows UK Equity Income	774	500	18.8	217.08	1136	40
Framlington Extra Income	280	500	94.0	4810	1133	45
Framlington Monthly Income Inc	1084	2000	34.2	3868	1163	44
Friends Prov Income	1168	1000	178.9	8850	1115	60
Friends Prov Stship Income	1087	1000	74.2	80.13	1088	78
GEM Dolphin Dividend	188	1000	7.3	7147	1142	36
Govett UK Equity Income	188	1000	2.3	11095	1042	78
GT Income	873	500	236.4	2389	1135	41
Guardian Income	987	500	9.0	1780	1123	58
Guinness Flight Equity Income	976	500	24.1	158.86	1118	59
Guinness Flight Hi Yld Hi Inc	976	500	10.4	13905	1180	18
Henderson High Income	1185	1000	102.1	388.82	1087	69
Hill Samuel High Yield	689	500	60.4	12.72	1130	48
HSBC Income	775	1000	38.0	781.2	1140	37
INVESCO Extra Income	1071	1000	35.7	208.50	1182	5
INVESCO UK Income	188	1000	124.8	489.40	1179	7
Johnson Fry Sector Value Inc	1085	1000	3.9	121.20	1180	28
Kleinwort Benson High Yield	1075	1000	89.2	1880	1178	10
Lawrence Keen Bridge Income	271	500	7.9	304.27	1180	4
Lazard UK Income	471	1000	180.3	401.8	1168	20
Legal & General Equity Income	985	1000	28.2	112.60	1083	73
London & Manchester Income	1284	500	50.7	85.82	1153	25
M&G Dividend	484	500	1188.3	5370	1089	75
M&G Equity Income	373	500	35.9	374.1	1011	79
M&G Extra Yield	1078	500	87.9	5882	1133	49
M&G High Income	389	500	468.5	28.40	1129	47
Martin Currie Income	989	1000	15.8	97.83	1125	52
Mercury Income	284	1000	112.0	2163	1165	15
Metropolitan UK Income Acc	387	1000	48.0	102.32	1151	27
Midland Income	589	1000	254.1	3685	1145	30
Morgan Grenfell UK Equity Acc	386	1000	613.5	3375	1145	31
Morgan Grenfell UK Equity Inc	386	1000	613.5	2819	1144	34
Murray Blue Chip Inc	384	1000	3.0	5898	1172	
Murray Equity Income	1185	500	53.3	117.80	1174	12
NatWest UK Income Acc	189	1000	63.1	6865	1140	38
Newton Higher Income	587	500	104.0	3775	1145	33
Prolific High Income	974	250	466.8	1800	1123	54
Prudential Equity Income	1188	1000	34.4	104.28	1103	77
Refuge Equity Income	484	500	119.8	3867	1149	29
River & Mercantile 1st Income	780	5000	1.9	8078	1176	8
Royal Life High Income (Dis)	788	500	22.1	1924	1169	14
Save & Prosper UK Equity Inc	884	1000	219.9	3015	1128	50
Schroder Income Inc	1168	1000	404.3	491.04	1158	21
Sovereign Income	587	500	41.2	7288	1111	60
St James UK High Income Acc	182	1500	32.7	214.9	1182	17
Standard Life UK Equ Hi Inc	585	1000	10.8	4865	1100	69
Sun Alliance Equity Income	1185	500	54.8	180.2	1178	8
Thornton UK High Yield Inc	376	500	86.2	186.08	1181	6
TSB Extra Income	1182	500	112.0	241.80	1118	58
United Friendly UK Equity Inc Acc	1089	1000	115.8	184.87	1084	70

UK EQUITY & BOND

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
BWD Balanced Portfolio	189	500	13.4	228.65	1242	1
Sun Life Managed Inc & Gr Inc	885	500	31.6	103.87	1158	2
Sun Life Managed High Yld Inc	885	500	9.2	108.37	1154	3
Carlile Income Dis	373	2000	79.7	1487	1137	7
Colonial Balanced	589	1000	21.6	78.65	1150	5
Credit Suisse High Income Port	589	5000	126.4	95.82	1117	10
Lloyds Bank Extra Income Acc	376	1000	91.6	820.80	1100	12
NPI UK Extra Income Acc	891	500	48.4	123.50	1134	8
NPI UK Extra Income Inc	891	500	46.4	107.40	1131	9
Perpetual High Income	288	1000	1402.8	137.95	1154	4
Sun Life Cap Protector Acc	288	1000	5.8	73.82	1147	6
Sun Life/Canada High Inc	386	500	18.0	4089	1080	13
TSB High Income Acc	890	500	88.5	11084	1111	11

UK EQUITY & BOND INCOME

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
CU PPT High Yield	674	500	41.8	161.65	1170	1
Abbey National Extra Income	1077	500	44.8	288.8	1184	2
INVESCO UK Extra Income	388	1000	84.7	100.70	1151	3
AXA E&L British Preferred Inc	288	1000	8.4	8018	1082	27
Baillie Gifford Conv & General	1086	500	25.0	7812	1003	34
Barclays Uni Distribution	185	2000	45.7	1200	1145	4
Barclays Uni Income Builder	480	500	252.1	7868	1095	23
Baring Convertibles	288	1000	5.9	6729	1055	32
Cazenove UK Equity & Bond	288	2000	67.7	65.82	1132	7
CIS UK Income	889	500	258.7	1724	1125	9
Cler Med Retirement Income Inc	288	5000	22.2	32.24	1127	8
Edinburgh High Distribution	1184	500	13.5	205.4	1110	14
F&C High Income	283	2500	39.1	2448	1101	17
Fidelity High Income	288	1000	165.8	2549	1118	11
Framlington Quarterly Inc Acc	488	500	18.6	75.74	1088	24
Framlington Quarterly Income	488	500	18.6	6479	1086	25
Friends Prov Monthly Dist	785	5000	18.8	8567	1085	28
Gartmore High Income	1173	1000	55.9	4028	1088	21
Guardian Balanced	384	500	10.0	1150	1072	29
Guinness Flight Eq & Bd Income	888	1000	8.6	12.695	1088	20
Henderson Extra Income	877	1000	70.3	337.77	1100	18
Henry Cooke Advent Income	587	500	7.6	82.15	1100	19
HSBC High Income	1084	5000	38.7	135.1	1140	5
Midland Extra High Income	484	1000	33.9	7945	1108	15
Midland High Yield	277	1000	44.3	271.1	1188	6
Morgan Grenfell High Income	888	1000	89.7	22.33	1022	38
Nat Ass Stockmarket Inc	1085	2000	2.8	1159	1108	16
Portfolio High Income Fd of Fd	185	3000	1.8	81.07	1087	30
Prolific Extra Income	1084	500	180.4	2080	1117	12
Prudential Distribution Inc	384	500	47.7	117.21	1114	19
Prudential High Income	1284	1000	24.5	106.21	1079	26
Scot Equitable Dolphin Acc	1085	500	0.9	3015	1086	22
Smith & Williamson Income	587	500	9.3	1597	1119	10
Sun Life Managed Extra Inc Acc	1180	500	4.7	5112	1088	31

GILT & FIXED INTEREST

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Fleming Select Long-dated Gilt	888	10000	11.4	108.7	1188	1
Abtrust Fixed Interest	479	500	85.4	2791	1165	2
M&G Corporate Bond	484	500	393.4	28.92	1163	3
Abbey Capital Reserve Acc	1082	1000	2.6	1481	1042	54
Abbey Gilts & Fixed Interest	1278	1000	18.2	141.5	1052	44
Abtrust Aberdeen Gilt Income	882	1000	31.4	5040	1077	27
Allied Dunbar Conv & Gilt	782	2000	13.7	58.180	1139	5
Allied Dunbar Government Secs	580	2000	3.8	37.60	1053	41
AXA E&L Gilt & Fixed Int Inc	881	1000	78.7	98.07	1016	64
Baillie Gifford Bond	482	5000	34.8	127.8	1068	35
Barclays Unit Gilt & Fixed Int	1180	1000	683.5	8168	1082	17
Britannia Gilt & Fixed Int Inc	780	2500	61.0	108.47	1086	21
Baring Short Dated Gilt	687	500	2.8	65.14	1014	53
Carlile Bond	784	500	35.1	1877	1053	43
Carlile Gilt & Fixed	1081	2000	5.3	48.35	1044	52
Capel-Cure Fixed Interest	985	1000	18.1	108.40	1030	19
Colonial High Income	1086	1000	3.0	6577	1086	14
CU PPT Monthly Income Plus	589	5000	272.1	5476	1108	10
CU PPT Preference Inc	1273	500	35.1	52.41	1103	11
Eagle Star Extra Income Acc	1085	1000	7.5	5754	1075	29
Eagle Star UK Pref & Fix Inc	885	1000	20.8	6462	1045	51
Edinburgh Convertible	288	500	7.7	2507	1079	28
Edinburgh Preferred High Inc	883	500	14.5	24.85	1089	23
Exeter Zero Preference	581	750	59.8	4850	1051	45
Framlington Convertible	281	500	35.1	1888	1075	30
Framlington Gilt Acc	789	500	26.9	1039	1040	58
Gartmore Extra Yield	1182	1000	15.0	28.37	1110	8
Gartmore PS Fixed Interest	1088	10000	17.7	104.11	1121	6
Gartmore PS Index Linked Gilt	688	10000	6.3	104.55	1096	13
Govett Corporate Bond	884	500	4.8	10.28	1053	42
Guardian Extra Income Acc	1085	1000	5.7	1152	1079	25
Guardian Gilt & Fixed Interest	782	500	16.5	140.2	1050	46
Guinness Flight Corporate Bond	1084	1000	71.7	11150	1070	32
Henderson Preference & Bond	1078	1000	47.9	62.87	1109	9
Hill Samuel Gilt & Fixed Inc	780	500	6.9	27.59	1048	49
INVESCO Gilt & Fixed Interest	980	1000	18.8	28.58	1048	48
Kleinwort Benson Gilt Yld Acc	181	1000	38.7	448.8	1058	36
Legal & General Fixed Interest	385	1000	18.8	5584	1070	33
Legal & General Gilt	481	1000	3.5	94.05	1056	40
M&G Gilt & Fixed Interest	1180	500	67.4	8388	1148	4
Mercury Govt Securities	281	1000	8.1	6845	1080	24
Mercury Long Dated Bond	788	5000	82.4	7885	1085	22
Metropolitan High Yld Bd Acc	1085	3000	5.8	5884	1088	20
Midland Gilt & Fixed Interest	1080	1000	48.6	6887	1058	38
Murray Acumen Reserve	588	500	12.7	10070	1088	12
Murray Corporate Bond Acc	585	1000	1.9	6849	1084	16
NatWest UK Gilt & Fx Int Acc	189	1000	48.8	6344	1031	61
Norwich Gilt & Convertible	688	500	10.6	118.09	1071	31
Prolific Convertible & Gilt	889	500	28.3	1342	1088	18
Prolific Pref & Fixed Interest	488	500	23.9	5036	1112	7
Prudential Premier Inc	781	1000	3.1	5080	1040	55
Save & Prosper High Income	880	1000	54.5	5089	1070	34
Schroder Gilt & Fixed Int Acc	788	10000	113.2	8879	1078	26
Scot Equitable Extra Inc Acc	1285	500	4.3	2804	1046	50
Sovereign Convertible Preferred	388	500	17.0	6276	1057	37
Standard Life Gilt & Fixed Inc	585	1000	1.7	2460	1030	57
Thornton Preference Inc	1589	500	67.3	144.76	1092	19
TSB Premier Income Inc	1282	500	213.5	5437	1158	36
United Friendly Fixed Int Acc	280	1000	22.5	8809	1025	63
United Friendly Inde Link Gilt	290	1000	20.4	7927	1127	67
Whittingdale Gilt Growth	689	1000	7.8	32.07	1032	60
Whittingdale Gilt Income	889	1000	29.8	5441	1022	59
Whittingdale Short Dated Gilt	883	1000	35.7	5285	1038	58
Whittingdale Sterling Bond	1095	1000	4.4	51.45	1043	47

INTERNATIONAL FIXED INTEREST

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Barclays Uni European Bond Inc	1180	1000	12.8	1018	1084	1
Baring Global Bond	291	1000	149.9	78.64	1058	2
AES Intl Bond & Convertible	1191	1000	11.8	138.20	1034	3
Abbey Worldwide Bond	1279	1000	17.5	287.1	924	25
Abtrust Global Bond	1290	500	18.2	4406	1059	18
City Financial Beckman Intl	182	1000	46.1	9406	925	24
CU PPT Global Bond	1292	500	4.4	8394	896	32
Fidelity International Bond	1187	1000	57.6	2835	925	26
Friends Prov Intl Bond	295	1000	16.5	8082	920	21
Gartmore Global Bond	890	1000	29.4	2891	965	14
Guinness Flight Glob High Inc	491	1000	13.3	101.20	978	8
Guinness Flight Mgd Cur & Bd	1254	1000	1.7	9434	853	27
Henderson Global Bond	391	1000	6.4	5771	974	10
HSBC Global Bond	492	1000	4.4	2248	882	19
INVESCO International Bond	198	1000	3.1	5243	944	17
Legal & General Intl Bond	1086	1000	22.1	5017	904	21
Lincoln Intl Currency Bond	587	500	24.0	6138	913	30
Mercury Global Bond Acc	1191	1000	338.5	1857	1002	6
MGM International Bond	987	1000	4.8	6704	953	15
Murray Global Bond	687	500	4.5	4280	944	16
Newton International Bond	1291	1000	23.7	137.49	1029	4
Norwich International Bond	589	500	17.8	135.11	917	29
Old Mutual Worldwide Bond Acc	1057	500	15.2	135.50	1013	5
Perpetual Global Bond	592	1000	64.7	5802	963	13
Sanwa Global Bond	1191	500	13.4	6414	964	12
Save & Prosper Intl Bond	1179	1000	22.6	1651	886	22
Schroder Global Bond Acc	1195	500	176.5	8039	931	20
Sun Alliance Worldwide Bond	586	500	3.4	6103	926	23
Thornton Dresdner Europe Bnd	688	500	3.3	4178	918	25
TSB International Income Acc	690	500	13.0	9058	984	7
Waverley Global Bond	895	1000	0.1	0.9413	971	11
Whittingdale US Government Bnd	585	2000	2.1	0.8633	976	9

INVESTMENT TRUST UNITS

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Gartmore High Inc Inv Tst Acc	492	1000	9.7	119.25	1288	1
Gartmore Investment Trusts Inc	290	1000	13.5	138.30	1280	2
M&G Fund of Investment Trusts	489	500	68.3	8285	1128	3
Abtrust Fund of Invest Os	575	500	2.5	182.2	1084	6
Equitable Trust of Invest Tsts	1294	500	144.6	244.58	1103	4
Exeter Fund of Investment Tsts	787	1000	10.1	6098	1086	5
Gartmore Practical Inv Inc	141	1000	103.3	141.82	1066	9
London & Manchester Tst of Inv	1195	500	22.7	8817	1065	10
Save & Prosper ITU	397	1000	489.5	274.8	1075	7
Stewart Ivory Investment Tsts	989	500	15.0	2573	1072	8

FINANCIAL & PROPERTY SHARES

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Save & Prosper Financial Secs	1288	1000	217.7	304.8	1348	1
Abtrust Property Share	1090	500	18.8	87.12	1281	2
Hill Samuel Financial	1178	500	28.4	1291.8	1282	3
Aweoyo Residential Property	185	500	5.4	105.50	1025	8
Barclays Unit Property	991	1000	20.6	2756	1044	7
Edinburgh Financial	383	500	28.2	6889	1215	5
Framlington Financial Acc	1086	500	30.5	2279	1216	4
Norwich Property	981	500	142.5	9158	1088	6

INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Abtrust Latin American	289	500	13.8	7415	1334	1
Edinburgh Latin America	1092	500	41.0	3971	1225	2
Old Mutual Latin Am Cos Acc	681	500	22.0	8380	1231	3
Abbey International	589	1000	86.5	1511	1221	67
Abbey National International	1176	500	30.4	1273	1071	46
ABN AMRO Pembroke World Acc	580	1000	7.6	8659	1062	51
Abtrust Aberdeen World Fund	980	500	44.8	8007	1105	20
Abtrust Ethical	982	500	3.9	8692	1083	30
Allied Dunbar International	773	2000	9.2	21260	1014	101
Allied Dunbar Technology	335	2000	9.0	238.20	1028	104
Allied Dunbar Worldwide Ass Val	1086	2000	23.9	82.970	1011	103
Arbuthnot Growth Inc	773	2000	1.9	188.61	981	120
AXA E&L Global Opportunities	489	1000	19.2	113.33	1084	61
Baillie Gifford International	780	1000	18.8	1021.0	1034	75
Bank of Ireland Brit & Overs	1281	1000	108.7	4386	1068	48
Bank of Ireland Worldwide Opps	288	1000	11.7	2586	1036	72
Barclays Uni Worldwide	373	500	103.8	2179	1039	66
Baring Global Growth	686	1000	20.8	1825	1015	100
Beckstone Fmt Intl Gth Inc	688	25000	15.1	1026	1019	80
Beckstone Fmt Spec Opp Inc	688	25000	9.5	7261	1031	77
Britannia Intl Spec Opps Acc	687	500	25.1	16605	1197	5
BSI-Thornhill International	690	1000	8.6	7749	972	124
BWD International Growth	587	500	8.6	10003	947	131
Carlile International Growth	1082	500	110.5	2581	987	127
CIS Eraytn	590	500	108.1	2132	1084	26
City Financial Accum Ethical	1188	1000	4.8	208.50	1089	47
City Financial International	988	1000	4.7	8746	805	132
Cler Med Evergreen	280	500	19.2	3442	1029	65
Cler Med UK & Overseas	890	1000	24.8	6753	1081	31
CU Homeseeker	480	1000	5.3	10228	1029	63
CU Money Exempt	787	500	8.2	2302.7	1139	10
CU PPT Worldwide Growth Inc	1285	500	33.0	7992	989	109
Eagle Star Intl Spec Sits Acc	487	1000	30.7	6909	1024	85
Edinburgh Intl Cap & Income	285	500	10.8	1214	1080	37
Edinburgh International	770	500	32.9	4754	986	113
Ely Place Growth	885	250	21.7	301.40	1081	52
Equitable International Growth	686	500	198.6	181.24	1089	23
Exeter Warrant	282	1000	4.2	5459	903	134
Fidelity International PEP	790	1000	100.3	5586	1142	9
Fidelity Managed International	1082	1000	50.5	403.3	1118	17
Fleming Balanced	892	5000	35.0	1857	1119	36
Fleming Capital Portfolio	287	2000	3.3	1257	1131	12
Fleming Private Portfolio	971	10000	38.4	5361	1093	29
Framlington Ex Balanced Acc	1287	10000	11.2	9365	1147	8
Framlington Health	487	500	60.5	3012	1308	105
Framlington Intl Growth	1076	500	68.4	4647	988	112
Framlington Recovery	382	500	36.4	3887	903	130
Friends Prov Intl Growth Acc	1087	1000	245.9	6249	1011	78
GA Growth Portfolio	589	1000	14.4	1022	1071	45
GAM Sp & International Acc	184	10000	78.6	885.32	1104	21
Gartmore Global Utilities	1179	1000	22.4	1889	1077	39
Gartmore PS Managed Equity	688	10000	92.1	2822	1171	7
GEM Dolphin Special Situations	1082	1000	3.2	3858	1087	35
Govett International Growth	182	1000	12.2	1845	1006	105
GT International Growth	576	500	34.4	4300	1027	84
GT World Wide Special Sits	987	500	21.8	1768	1041	65
Guardian International	1087	500	61.2	2324	1002	108
Guinness Flight Intl PEP	587	500	1.7	8152	1077	40
Henderson Global Technology	1084	500	83.7	253.38	971	125
Henderson International	789	1000	38.4	35865	1039	68
Hill Samuel International	1089	500	64.9	320.94	1017	97
INVESCO International Growth	1169	1000	123.9	7512	1077	41
Jupiter Equity	583	500	27.1	7237	1095	27
Jupiter International Growth	171	500	12.4	3234	1078	35
Legal & General Global Growth	1578	1000	66.2	6582	974	122
Lincoln Global	632	500	32.1	1381	983	126
Lloyds Bank Worldwide Growth	1185	1000	54.5	3432	993	116
Lloyds Bank Worldwide Gth Acc	1186	1000	54.2	56.22	992	117
London & Manchester Intl	1284	500	30.2	92.14	948	111
M&G International Growth	1287	500	145.3	101.2	1016	94
Martin Currie Intl Growth	1279	1000	146.7	111.5	1065	72
Mathieson Select Portfolio	582	5000	10.5	115.30	1006	107
Mayflower International Leaders	573	500	4.1	2777	1097	25
Mercury International Opps	572	1000	78.3	6115	1024	74
MGM Intl Equity Growth	982	1000	7.2	9436	1025	72
Morgan Grenfell Intl Growth	1182	1000	1.7	2821	1023	82
Murray Worldwide Equity	277	500	5.5	64.36	1114	18
Newton General	290	1000	124.9	27.36	1128	14
Newton Global	1195	1000	26	4627	1120	16
Newton Intl Growth	587	500	25.1	4403	1136	11
Norwich Intl Index Tracking	591	5000	12.1	1708	1034	76
Norwich International	585	500	47.1	306.0	1059	67
NPI Global Care Inc	597	500	36.2	5948	1172	43
NPI Overseas Acc	1274	500	52.5	16123	984	120
NPI Worldwide Acc	796	500	62	15612	925	128
Old Mutual Intl Mgd PEP Acc	357	500	11.4	9281	1093	33
Old Mutual Worldwide	485	500	62.5	206.80	1097	28
Pantheon Fund Inc	1294	5000	21.1	1535	1133	12
Pearl International Equity	1195	1000	115.3	2141	962	118
Perpetual Intl Emerging Cos	984	1000	172.7	22172	1012	90
Perpetual International Growth	374	500	275.5	3064	1149	57
Perpetual Latin American Gth	1194	1000	31.4	4259	1209	4
Perpetual Overseas Exempt	1291	1000	12.5	38751	1042	62
Perpetual PEP Growth	395	500	122.5	169.44	1066	49
Perpetual Worldwide Recovery	182	1000	66.2	52254	1030	79
Pilgrim Global Acc	790	1000	1.1	7928	984	115
PM Overseas Growth	1086	500	5.2	1392	1214	7
Prolific International	1295	250	75.5	2427	1012	102
Prolific Technology	1292	250	136.2	742.7	973	123
Prudential Global Growth	1225	1000	325.6	1277.9	1025	54
Prudential Intl Smaller Cos	957	1000	36.5	10572	1045	58
Prudential International Growth	1254	1000	59.4	25152	1062	58
Refuge International	494	500	254.2	3765	1029	61
Royal Life Intl Growth	977	500	53.6	8937	1021	86
Royal Life Intl Speculative	957	500	22.2	5162	1020	89
Royal London International G	1290	2000	12.4	1798	1013	97
Save & Prosper Growth	1127	1000	145.1	4962	1101	6
Save & Prosper UK & Overseas	1252	1000	136.4	2204	1081	36
Schroder Global Equ Acc Inst	590	10000	21.5	12649	1072	42
Schroder Global Smaller Cos	656	1000	137.5	14525	966	118
Schroder Overseas Equity Inc	1256	1000	438.4	238.42	1017	36
Schroder Portfolio Inc	590	1000	269.8	10664	1062	34
Scot Equitable International	1174	500	125.6	2052	1020	80
Scot Equitable Technology	1265	500	21.7	17290	1066	56
Scot Equitable UK Global Acc	1156	500	15.2	6056	1095	27
Scot Equitable Wkce Tsc Fr	1257	500	25.2	5430	1051	52
Scot Life Worldwide	1127	250	44.5	1125	978	120
Scot Mutual Intl Growth Acc	489	500	32.6	2794	996	114
Scot Mutual Wide Venture Acc	1187	500	9.5	1246	1042	62
Scot Widows Global Acc	1266	500	22.2	2143	1076	93
Smith & Williamson Capital	730	10000	33.2	166.6	1042	64
Smith & Williamson Magnum	989	2500	24.7	1778	1021	86
Smith & Williamson Thoroughbred	1290	5000	16.1	2276	1015	99
Sovereign International Growth	587	500	36.0	12230	992	119
Sovereign Managed	587	500	22.2	1052	1036	70
St James Growth Acc	890	1500	71.9	776.9	1046	60
St James International Inc	1171	1500	95.4	454.8	1064	50
Standard Global Advantage Acc	990	1000	486.3	5538	1105	19
Standard Life Managed Acc	596	1000	82.9	7461	1103	32
Standard Life OS Large Cos Acc	695	5000	2066.7	4126	962	129
Sun Life Managed Growth Acc	685	500	16.1	119.39	889	110
Sun Life/Canada Wwide Growth	487	1000	11.4	47.29	1016	59
Templeton Global Growth Acc	988	1500	35.7	315.17	1071	44
Templeton Value Inc	789	1000	3.9	17241	1122	15
TSB International	375	500	82.5	70.244	1016	98

NORTH AMERICA

		Min	Fund		Over 1 Year	
Old Mutual North American Inc	486	500	21.8	185.80	1326	1
HSBC American Index	1085	1000	7.9	328.4	1245	2
Gartmore PS US USA	1082	10000	24.5	219.06	1234	3
Abbey American Growth	1279	1000	347.6	4894	1180	18
Abbey US Emerging Companies	1183	1000	63.8	2017	949	104
Abtrust American Inc & Growth	885	500	22.9	6850	1135	45
AES North American	690	1000	7.8	16510	1091	77
Allied Dunbar America Spec Sit	1182	2000	30.8	27330	1184	14
Allied Dunbar American Income	784	2000	17.0	79000	1198	7
Allied Dunbar Sec of America	288	2000	117.2	7113.0	1126	52
AXA E&L North America	1081	1000	112.7	398.60	1002	100
Baillie Gifford America	1084	1000	33.2	3865	1094	75
Barclays Uni America	574	500	86.9	2067	1143	37
Barclays Uni American Rec Acc	689	1000	30.2	1454	1088	78
Baring American Growth	281	1000	40.2	1503	1176	25
Baring American Smaller Cos	537	1000	42.5	1606	902	107
Britannia American Growth Inc	487	500	32.2	12240	1191	11
Carlile North American	384	500	36.8	3339	1132	55
Capel-Cure American & General	535	500	37.1	257.30	1149	32
Cazenove American Portfolio	589	2500	58.4	144.76	1125	54
City Financial Beck Bio-Tech	1092	500	11.0	4929	864	135
Cler Med American Growth	386	1000	42.9	8837	1069	86
CU PPT North American	484	500	56.0	28249	1155	28
Eagle Star North American	985	1000	22.8	3350	1148	30
Edinburgh North American	985	1000	17.4	5342	1222	5
Equitable North American	1284	500	52.1	172.75	1135	44
F&C North American Exempt	1076	5000	22.5	17026	1153	26
F&C US Small Companies	1282	1000	172.4	475.19	1065	82
Fidelity American	1279	1000	156.0	3853	1100	73
Fidelity American Spec Sits	1180	1000	61.4	3058	1073	65
Five Arrows America Inc	972	500	19.4	79181	1092	76
Framlington Amer Small Cos	478	500	41.0	7186	1003	99
Framlington American Growth	1292	500	7.0	9002	1050	92
Friends Prov American	1085	1000	99.2	73.58	1136	43
Friends Prov American Sm Cos	1084	1000	15.1	22160	1043	95
Friends Prov Stship N Am Acc	1087	1000	7.6	156.40	1119	61
GAM North America Acc	185	10000	35.0	60289	1119	59
Gartmore American	176	1000	25.5	22075	1125	48
Gartmore American Emer Gth	386	1000	58.8	193.17	1140	40
Gartmore PS American	688	10000	28.2	38.930	1227	6
Gartmore PS American Emer Cos	1186	10000	150.3	388.05	1149	31
Govett American General	784	500	9.1	27930	1223	4
Govett American Strategy	583	1000	15.0	287.35	945	105
GT American Smaller Companies	581	500	5.4	2254	843	109
GT US Growth	1277	500	35.3	220.2	1022	80
Guardian North American	1087	500	91.2	4223	1086	79
Henderson American Smaller Cos	475	1000	34.9	186.55	1058	90
Henderson Ex North American	1070	2000	27.7	239.27	1119	60
Henderson North America	173	1000	33.5	275.49	1122	56
Hill Samuel Dollar	966	500	43.8	59.65	1178	18
Hill Samuel US Smaller Cos	966	500	54.1	170.23	1178	17
HSBC American Growth	1179	1000	17.4	7366	1122	57
INVESCO Amer Smaller Cos	1178	1000	6.4	167.90	1153	30
INVESCO American Growth	674	1000	15.2	77.94	1114	64
Jupiter World Healthcare	297	500	3.1	235.10	895	101
Kleinwort Benson Amer Small Cos	684	500	5.4	1755	1115	62
Kleinwort Benson North America	1075	500	37.9	1269	1129	40
Lazard North America Growth	1086	1000	63.4	146.2	1113	65
Legal & General North American	785	1000	42.2	249.30	1195	5
Legal & General US Index	992	1000	83.6	96.67	1175	21
Lincoln North American	1283	500	86.1	1537	1042	94
Lloyds Bank N Amer Sm Co Rec	1192	1000	5.6	2190	951	132
Lloyds Bank Nth Amer & Gen Acc	1292	1000	18.3	34235	1108	51
London & Manchester American	1195	500	32.9	104.65	1114	65
M&G American & General Acc	1172	500	254.4	741	1095	74
M&G American Recovery	679	500	61.1	7188	1190	12
M&G American Smaller Cos	689	500	32.4	1715	951	102
Martin Currie North America	980	1000	32.4	1176	1177	19
Mercury American	1282	1000	97.5	3071	1173	22
Mercury American Opps Acc	587	1000	29.8	1081	1058	88
MGM North American Growth	987	1000	21.8	16411	1143	38
Morgan Grenfell American Gth	1188	1000	185.1	5450	1073	84
Morgan Grenfell US Ind Trk Acc	1188	1000	7.9	3714	1167	23
Murray American Growth	482	500	14.2	7888	1144	35
NatWest North America Acc	189	1000	14.1	7352	1111	67
Newton American Growth	1186	500	6.1	6428	1132	46
Norwich North American	686	500	54.6	29273	1153	29
Norwich Nth American Small Co	1089	500	39.9	30071	1143	36

SECTOR AVERAGES

	Fund size £M	Over 1 Yr Value £100	*Number of funds

Top three performing funds of each sector are highlighted in bold at the top of each sector. The two end columns showing the value of £100 and rank over one year are based on offer to bid prices with income reinvested. All funds are more than one year old. Fund sizes taken on the first day of the present month. The Independent publishes other unit trust information Tuesday to Friday. Source: FT Information/TSW

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Legal & General Investment Management

Foreign Exchange Rates

STERLING Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	DOLLAR Spot	1 month	3 months	D-MARK Spot
US	1.5973	10-8	28-25	1.000	-	-	0.5878
Canada	2.1769	61-56	170-162	1.3629	29-26	82-80	0.6011
Germany	2.7174	70-63	207-196	1.7012	33-31	99-96	1.0000
France	9.1562	232-211	675-641	5.7335	110-104	322-312	3.3703
Italy	2704.6	26-42	71-94	1693.3	26.5-33.5	73.5-83.5	995.327
Japan	196.15	99-95	286-260	122.80	54-53	157-155	72.1843
ECU	1.3995	24-20	72-66	1.1414	11-12	36-35	0.5150
Belgium	56.051	15-10	42-35	35.091	7-5	20-17	20.6273
Denmark	10.368	250-190	710-600	6.4912	99-79	298-247	3.8157
Netherlands	3.0579	85-77	246-232	1.9139	39-37	121-115	1.1250
Ireland	1.0245	5-1	15-9	1.5592	5-4	11-9	0.2770
Norway	10.920	280-210	790-670	6.8365	50-25	119-89	4.0186
Spain	230.53	12.8-13.3	0.1-3.1	144.36	8.9-9.3	17.0-25.0	84.8607
Sweden	12.253	220-160	640-530	7.6709	41-16	152-101	4.5091
Switzerland	2.3311	93-84	274-260	1.4594	45-46	145-139	0.8579
Australia*	2.0155	2-4	14-4	1.2618	6-8	14-16	0.7417
Hong Kong	12.369	67-25	184-126	7.7437	2-0	2-7	4.5519
Malaysia	3.9550	0-0	0-0	2.4760	27-30	80-85	1.4554
New Zealand*	2.2847	25-33	74-86	1.4303	22-24	65-67	0.8408
Saudi Arabia	5.9906	0-0	0-0	3.7505	1-4	5-9	2.2046
Singapore	2.2910	0-0	0-0	1.4343	24-19	70-65	0.8431

OTHER SPOT RATES

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.5975	0.9998	Nigeria	136.133	85.2000
Austria	19.1246	11.9731	Oman	0.6152	0.3850
Brazil	1.6865	1.0555	Pakistan	64.0397	40.0799
China	13.2545	8.2955	Philippines	42.0940	26.3450
Egypt	5.4274	3.3989	Portugal	272.987	170.935
Finland	8.1124	5.0772	Qatar	5.8119	3.6397
Ghana	2942.90	1845.00	Russia	9117.05	5706.00
Greece	427.459	267.530	South Africa	7.0335	4.4020
India	57.2473	35.8400	Taiwan	44.0194	27.5500
Kuwait	0.4849	0.3035	UAE	5.8687	3.6730

Note: Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount (subtract from spot rate); those quoted low to high are at a premium (add to spot rate). *Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals. For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033. Calls cost 50p per minute (daytime) 45p at other times.

Tourist Rates

£ Buys		£ Buys		£ Buys	
Australia(Dollars)	1.9500	France(Francs)	8.8550	New Zealand(Dollars)	2.2130
Austria(Schillings)	18.5050	Germany(Marks)	2.6280	Norway(Kroner)	10.5300
Belgium(Francs)	54.2300	Greece(Drachmas)	415.0000	Portugal(Escudos)	263.5000
Canada(Dollars)	2.1210	Hong Kong(Dollars)	12.0200	Spain(Pesetas)	221.7500
Cyprus(Pounds)	0.7880	Ireland(Punts)	0.9900	Sweden(Kronor)	11.9400
Denmark(Kroner)	10.1050	Italy(Lira)	2644.5300	Switzerland(Francs)	2.2575
Holland(Guilders)	2.9475	Japan(Yen)	191.9000	Turkey(Lira)	193730.0000
Finland(Marks)	7.9050	Malta(Lira)	0.5980	United States(Dollars)	1.5625

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	5.00%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	8.75%	Discount	0.50%
France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Intervention	3.15%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.25%	Discount	2.50%
Italy		Prime	4.75%	Spain		Central	3.00%
Discount	7.5%	Discount	5.00%	10-Day Repo	6.00%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
Advances	2.70%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (Are)	4.10%	Lombard	4.125%

Bond Yields

Country	5 yr	Yield %	10 yr	yield %	Country	5 yr	Yield %	10 yr	yield %
UK	7.0%	6.94	7.50%	7.30	Netherlands	6.75%	4.72	6.0%	5.56
US	6.25%	6.42	6.50%	6.59	Spain	7.9%	6.21	7.35%	6.38
Japan	6.0%	1.36	2.9%	2.46	Italy	7.75%	7.33	7.75%	7.61
Australia	10.0%	7.53	6.75%	7.90	Belgium	9.0%	4.58	6.25%	5.77
Germany	8.0%	4.76	6.0%	5.66	Sweden	13.0%	5.69	6.50%	6.82
France	5.5%	4.67	5.5%	5.54	ECU OAT	6.0%	4.90	5.50%	6.09

Source: HSBC Markets Research. Yields calculated on local basis. ** Denotes new benchmark

Money Market Rates

	O'Night		7 Day		1 Month		3 Months		6 Months		1 Year	
Interbank	5¼	6¼	5¾	6⅛	5⅞	6⅛	6⅛	6¼	6¼	6⅜	6⅜	6½
Sterling CDs	-		-		6		6⅛		6¼		6⅜	
Local Authority Deps	5¾		5¾		6		6⅛		6⅜		6½	
Discount Market Deps	5½		5⅝									
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-		-		5⅞		6⅛		-		-	
Dollar CDs	-		-		5.09		5.16		5.28		5.54	
ECU Linked Dep	4¼	4	-		4¼	4	4¼	4	4¼	4	4¼	4

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract		Settlement price	High/Low for day		EstConts traded	Open interest
Long Gilt	(Mar 97)	111-20	111-26	111-21	3026	29065
German Gvt Bd	(Jun 97)	101.42	101.63	101.37	205547	239457
Italian Bond	(Jun 97)	125.97	126.30	125.20	83534	105586
Japan Gvt Bd	(Jun 97)	126.32	126.38	126.25	1544	n/a
3 Mth Sterling	(Mar 97)	93.75	93.76	93.74	5829	83011
	(Jun 97)	93.56	93.57	93.55	12045	136301
3 Mth Euromark	(Mar 97)	96.74	96.74	96.73	8762	162213
	(Jun 97)	96.73	96.74	96.71	28202	198821
3 Mth Eurolira	(Mar 97)	92.63	92.67	92.56	11310	55443
	(Jun 97)	93.01	93.04	92.89	28265	110281
3 Mth Euroyen	(Jun 97)	99.42			0	n/a
3 Mth Euroswiss	(Mar 97)	98.11	98.11	98.06	5238	27689
	(Jun 97)	98.16	98.17	98.11	11967	40515
3 Mth ECU	(Mar 97)	95.75	95.76	95.72	1900	8333
	(Jun 97)	95.74	95.75	95.70	2187	7802
FTSE 100	(Mar 97)	4387.0	4400.0	4373.0	16734	45746
FTSE 250	(Mar 97)	4736.0			0	4649

Liffe FTSE Index Option

Settlement price: 4388 Series	4300	4350	4400	4450	Call/Put Total/vols
	closing offer price				
Mar	98/7	56/16	22/36	6/69	--
Apr	125/37	90/53	59/73	36/100	--
May	155/82	123/80	82/99	68/125	--
Jun	189/80	154/97	121/115	97/141	110/161

Commodities

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange

$/tonne	Cash	3 mths	Volume	LME Stocks		chg
Aluminium HG	1635.5-36.5	1667.0-67.5	72395	877675	-	2975
Aluminium Alloy	1525.0-30	1549.0-50	908	73620	-	120
Copper A	2400.5-02.5	2340-41	48763	205535	-	3050
Lead	669.0-8.0	692.0-4.0	10419	109075	-	100
Nickel	7970-7980	8080-85	18714	45810	+	18
Tin	6050-60	6050-60	5957	8430	-	380
Zinc	1261.5-62.5	1283.0-84.0	25042	468075	-	1025
Settlement Conversion exchange rates	C$ 1.6016	DMs 1.8946	¥s 122.58	Stock volumes & change in tonnes as at Tue 11 Mar		

PRECIOUS METALS

per fine oz	$	£	Coins	$	£		$	£
Platinum	382.00	238.75	Britannia	376	235	Krugrands	353/364	221/228
Palladium	152.00	95.00	Britannia.5 oz	190	119	Sovs	82/91	51/57
Silver spot	326.25	523.0	Britannia.25 oz	94	59	Nobles	376/392	235/245
Gold Bulln	352.90	220.70	Britannia 10 oz	45	28	Maple Leaf	360/376	225/235

Source: Sharps Pixley & Son

AGRICULTURAL

Cocoa		Coffee		Barley		Potatoes		Potatoes	
LIFFE	£/tonn	LIFFE	$/tonne	LIFFE	£/tonne	LIFFE	£/tonne	ATA	£/tonne
Mar	994	Mar	1755	Mar	89.50	Apr	51.50	Mar	11.00
May	1006	May	1736	May	90.25	May	57.50	April	12.00
Jul	1014	Jul	1732	Sept	90.75	Jun	69.00	May	13.30
Vol	10466	Vol	4679	Vol	44	Vol	117	Vol	134

White Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Corn		
LIFFE	$/tonne	LIFFE $10/index pt		LIFFE	£/tonne	CBOT#	Cents/bushel	
May	304.70	Feb	1520	Mar	96.80		Hi-Lo	Sett
Aug	303.80	Mar	1620	May	98.90	Mar	309/302.75	304.25
Oct	300.50	Vol	1585	Jul	101.25	May	305.75-299.50	301.75
Vol	1240	Index	1454	Vol	562	Jul	304.75-298.50	300.50

Source: CMS

Other Softs (Agricultural)

Mar	Maize (No 3)**	$/tonne	109.0	Apr	Soya Oil§	FL/100kg	104.0
Mar	Copra (†)	$/tonne	135.0	Mar	Coconut Oil (†)	$/tonne	752.50
May	Cotton (NY)	UScents/lb	84.80	Mar	Sunflower Oil§	$/tonne	535.0
unq	Wool	Acents/kg	unq	Apr	Rapeseed Oil§	FL/100kg	104.50
Apr	Rubber*	Mcents/kg	307.0	Mar	Groundnut Oil	$/tonne	900.0

Origin: §Dutch/EC - only origin - †Philippines/Indonesia *Malaysia **N Europe Source: FT Information/Reuters

ENERGY

IPE	5.30pm	*chg	Yr ago	IPE	close	*chg	WTI	6pm	Spot CIF North West Europe	
Brent Crude ($/barrel)				Gasoil ($/tonne)					Products † ($/tonne)	
Apr	19.59	+0.49		Mar	163.25	-3.75	Apr	20.90	Prem Unleaded	209/211
May	19.39	+0.36		Apr	165.25	-3.75	May	20.90	Naphtha	197/200
Jun	19.30	+0.28		May	166.50	-3.00	Jun	20.90	EC Gasoil	170/171
Vol	57899	Index	19.19	Vol	23673		Jul	20.80	Heavy Fuel Oil	82/84

*since 5.30pm previous day. Year ago prices show average for week. Source: IDS-London Oil Reports. †6pm prices

COMMODITY INDICES

*GSCI Indices	Base date	+Spot	%Day Chg	Dec 31st	%Yr to dt chg	Year ago	% Yr chg
Index	1970=100	192.86	-0.06	215.26	-10.41	196.72	-1.44
Agricultural	1970=100	252.22	-0.60	231.23	+9.08	284.09	-10.34
Energy	1983=100	68.16	+0.15	85.86	-20.61	66.60	+2.58
Industl Metals	1977=100	186.29	-0.02	168.79	+10.36	188.86	-1.84
Livestock	1970=100	188.13	-0.15	191.03	-1.52	185.54	+3.49
Precious Metals	1973=100	456.30	0.85	463.54	-1.56	508.48	-10.58

Source: Goldman, Sachs & Co *GSCI is a trademark and servicemark of Goldman, Sachs & Co †Close as of 13 Mar 1997

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Stock	Bid	Mid	Offer
Abbey Equity Ser 4	290.4		305.7
Abbey International Ser 4	224.7		236.6
Abbey Managed Ser 4	815.8		858.8
Abbey National Managed 1	148.8		158.7
Abbey National UK Equity	160.9		169.4
Albany Equity Acc Ser 3	2083.3		2192.9
Albany Multiple Inv Acc S3	1290.5		1358.4
Allied Dunbar Distribution Bond	25.70		27.16
Allied Dunbar Equity Acc	1818.4		1914.2
Allied Dunbar Gen 4 High Income Ser 2	41.10		43.53
Allied Dunbar Managed Acc	1376.5		1449.0
Allied Dunbar Property Acc	671.90		707.30
AXA Equity & Law Bal Ser 6	902.70		950.20
AXA Equity & Law Dist Ser 6	106.70		112.30
AXA Equity & Law Hi Inc Ser 6	1376.00		1448.40
AXA Equity & Law UK Eq Ser 6	1339.10		1409.50
Barclays Equity Acc	1151.7		1212.4
Barclays International Acc	473.0		497.9
Barclays Managed Acc	665.4		700.5
Black Horse Income Fund Ser 2	961.14		1011.73
Black Horse Unga Inv S2	598.47		629.97
Canada Managed Ser 2	891.9		938.7
CIU Fid Equity	436.1		459.1
CIU Fid Sapphire Mixed	359.5		378.5
CIU Wtn Profits Bond	1107		1107
Confederation Equity 1	2235.0		2352.6
Commercial Union Managed	500.0		526.4
Commercial Union UK Equity	653.0		687.4
Commercial Union With Profit	138.6		145.9
Eagle Star Managed 2	250.5		271.1
Family Performance	170.98		179.98
Friends Provident Managed	391.5		412.5
Friends Provident Uk Equity	548.1		577.0
Friends Provident Wth Profit	211.2		222.4
General Accident With Profit	169.6		169.0
GA Prov Mutual Eq Ord	972.3		1023.5
GA Prov Mutual Mgd Ord	599.0		639.5
Gan Managed	372.6		392.3
GRE Equity Acc	1380.9		1453.6
GRE International Acc	771.6		812.2
GRE Managed Acc	849.4		894.1
Hill Samuel Equity	800.8		847.5
Hill Samuel Managed Ser A	693.5		730.0
Irish Life Global Mgd Prop Ser 3	722.2		758.1
J Rothschild/Stj Place Mgd	194.1		204.4
Laurentian Imperial UK Mgd Acc	335.2		352.6
Laurentian Managed Acc Ser 3	658.2		693.7
Laurentian UK Equity Acc	596.6		630.1
Legal & General Equity Acc	1549.6		1631.2
Legal & General International Acc	633.0		666.4
Legal & General Managed Accum	1032.9		1087.3
London & Manchester Flexible Acc		722.4	
London Equity		1146.00	
London Mixed		726.00	
M & G Managed Bond Acc	1084.5		1138.8
M & G Recovery Bond Acc	962.2		1010.5
Merchant Investors Managed	594.4		625.8
Midland Balanced	102.8		109.3
Midland Uk Equity	146.0		154.8
NatWest Growth Managed	149.8		156.7
NatWest Security Mgd	132.7		139.7
NatWest Uk Equity	167.4		176.2
Norwich Union Mgd Ex NUAM MF	1852.4		1949.9
Norwich Union Unitised Managed	181.50		191.05
Norwich Union Unitised With Profits	169.03		177.93
NPI Managed	605.2		637.0
Pearl Equity Nat	356.3		375.7
Pearl Managed	312.7		329.2
Prudential Prufund Managed	442.3		460.8
Prudential Indv Mgd Ser 2	996.8		1051.4
Royal Life Managed	484.6		510.1
Royal Scottish Growth Managed	206.9		217.8
Royal Scottish UK Equity	216.9		228.4
Scottish Amicable Equity Ser 1	796.7		838.2
Scottish Amicable Managed Ser 1	577.5		607.9
Scottish Equitable Mixed	325.1		342.3
Scottish Life Managed	361.9		381.1
Scottish Mutual Safety	283.6		298.4
Scot Prov Inst Blue Chip	204.9		215.8
Scot Prov Inst With-Profits	135.6		142.8
Scottish Widows International	570.1		600.2
Scottish Widows Mixed	569.1		598.1
Standard Equity	1388.6		1461.7
Standard European	213.2		224.5
Standard Far East	171.9		181.0
Standard Fixed Interest	468.6		493.1
Standard Managed	899.5		946.9
Sun Alliance Equity	1214.7		1278.7
Sun Alliance Managed	878.9		925.2
Sun Life Deferred Distribution	208.5		217.4
Sun Life Distribution	311.9		328.4
Sun Life Equity Acc	1932.4		2034.2
Sun Life Managed Acc	1113.2		1171.8
Sun Life Can Century Eq		158.0	
Sun Life Can Century Mgd		149.3	
Sun Life Can Maple Leaf Eq Acc	697.9		734.6
Sun Life Can Maple Leaf Mgd Acc	485.9		511.5
TSB Equity	476.8		501.8
TSB Homebuyer	282.8		297.8
TSB Managed	356.1		374.9

sport

TEST CRICKET: Difficult day for home batsmen as New Zealand and South Africa are bowled out cheaply and West Indies toil

Gillespie repays captain's gamble

NEIL MANTHORP

reports from Port Elizabeth
South Africa 209
Australia 10-1

Jason Gillespie claimed his first five-wicket haul in only his fourth Test for Australia as South Africa were bundled out for 209 on the first day of the second Test here yesterday.

The performance vindicated the decision of the captain, Mark Taylor, to put the hosts in on a damp, well-grassed pitch and by the close the Australians, already one up in the three-Test series, had reached 10 for 1 in reply, Matthew Hayden being dismissed for a duck as Daryll Cullinan pulled off a smart slip catch off Shaun Pollock.

Gillespie shared four wickets with fellow pace man Glenn McGrath in the morning session, but then took the first three wickets after lunch to finish the day with 5 for 54 from 23 hostile and accurate overs.

Gary Kirsten was the first to go when he could only fend a Gillespie lifter into the hands of Hayden at short leg for a duck in the sixth over. Another Gillespie lifter saw Jacques Kallis lob a simple catch to Greg Blewett at backward short leg, also for a duck. The opener Adam Bacher survived an impassioned appeal for a catch at the wicket before he had scored but then fell to McGrath for 11, caught in the gully by Matthew Elliott.

Hansie Cronje, the South African captain, then recorded the third duck of the innings when he was bowled off an inside edge by McGrath to leave his team on 22 for 4. Cullinan and Herschelle Gibbs launched a mini-revival either side of lunch before Gillespie found a thick edge and Shane Warne took the catch in the gully to remove Cullinan for 34. Gillespie then removed Gibbs' off stump for 31 and had Pollock lbw next delivery – the fourth duck.

Brian McMillan and Dave Richardson offered some resistance with an eighth-wicket partnership of 85, but Warne took the last three wickets in quick succession to finish with 3 for 62.

Richardson, three runs short of his half-century, skied an off-drive to a tumbling McGrath and then McMillan pulled Warne to Steve Waugh at deep square-leg for 55. The innings closed shortly after when Allan Donald prodded a simple return catch to the bowler.

First day: Australia won toss

SOUTH AFRICA – First innings

G Kirsten c Hayden b Gillespie	0
A M Bacher c Elliott b McGrath	11
J H Kallis c Blewett b Gillespie	0
D J Cullinan c Warne b Gillespie	34
*W J Cronje b McGrath	0
H H Gibbs b Gillespie	31
B M McMillan c S R Waugh b Warne	55
S M Pollock lbw b Gillespie	0
†D J Richardson c McGrath b Warne	47
A A Donald c and b Warne	9
P R Adams not out	5
Extras (b8 lb8 w1)	17
Total	209

Fall: 1-13 2-17 3-21 4-22 5-70 6-95 7-95 8-180 9-204.

Bowling: McGrath 22-7-66-2; Gillespie 23-10-54-5 (w1); Warne 23.4-5-62-3; Blewett 4-2-3-0; Bevan 2-0-8-0.

AUSTRALIA – First innings

M L Hayden c Cullinan b Pollock	0
*M A Taylor not out	7
M T G Elliott not out	1
Extras (b2)	2
Total (for 1)	10

Fall: 1-1

To bat: M E Waugh, S R Waugh, G S Blewett, M G Bevan, †I A Healy, S K Warne, J N Gillespie, G D McGrath.

Bowling: Donald 5-2-3-0, Pollock 4-2-2-1, Adams 2-0-2-0, McMillan 2-0-2-0.

Sri Lanka in control

New Zealand 222
v Sri Lanka

The young fast bowler Nuwan Zoysa and the spinner Muttiah Muralitharan took three wickets each as Sri Lanka dismissed New Zealand for 222 on the first day of the second Test in Hamilton yesterday.

Sri Lanka, needing a win to square the two-match series, tied down the home batsmen with a mixture of spin and swing. Only the opener Blair Pocock mastered the bowling with his best Test score, 85, patiently compiled over 286 minutes at the crease.

The tourists had an early breakthrough when Bryan Young, fresh from an unbeaten 267 in New Zealand's first Test win by an innings and 36 runs, was run out for just four.

(First day: New Zealand won toss)

NEW ZEALAND – First innings

B Pocock c Tillakaratne b Muralitharan	85
B A Young run out	4
M J Horne b Zoysa	21
*S P Fleming c Mahanama b Zoysa	2
N J Astle lbw b Zoysa	0
C L Cairns c Ranatunga b Dharmasena	10
†A C Parore run out	25
D N Patel c Dharmasena b Muralitharan	13
D Vettori b Muralitharan	4
S B Doull c A De Silva b Vaas	20
H T Davis not out	8
Extras (b11 lb9 nb10)	30
Total (90.4 overs)	222

Fall of wickets: 1-19 2-88 3-96 4-100 5-126 6-172 7-172 8-178 9-203.

Bowling: Vaas 12.4-1-32-1; Zoysa 18-3-47-3; S de Silva 15-4-36-0; Dharmasena 22-7-39-1; Muralitharan 22-4-43-3; Jayasuriya 1-0-5-0.

SRI LANKA: *A Ranatunga, S T Jayasuriya, R S Mahanama, P A De Silva, †H P Tillakaratne, R S Kaluwitharana, C Vaas, N Zoysa, M Muralitharan, K Dharmasena, S De Silva.

Australia's Jason Gillespie celebrates dismissing South Africa's No 3, Jacques Kallis, for nought in the second Test in Port Elizabeth yesterday Photograph: Allsport

Lara falls as India make early inroads

TONY COZIER

reports from Port of Spain
West Indies 61-3
v India

The West Indies were made to struggle for runs after winning the toss on the opening day of the second Test against India in Trinidad yesterday. By the time rain temporarily halted play 20 minutes after lunch they had limped uncertainly to 73 for 3.

Their problems were caused primarily by the quick and varied leg spin of Anil Kumble, who removed the openers Stuart Williams and Sherwin Campbell in each of his first two overs. But the real prize was snared by the left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi five minutes before lunch when Brian Lara was off balance driving into the off side and edged a low catch to Mohammad Azharuddin's right at slip.

The decision of the captain, Courtney Walsh, to bat came as a surprise since the West Indies chose once more to use four fast bowlers in spite of the injuries that kept Ian Bishop out of contention and forced the introduction of his fellow Trinidadian, the 22-year-old Mervyn Dillon, who has had only five first-class matches. Only Viv Richards and Richie Richardson, twice, have taken similar courses on winning the toss at the Queen's Park Oval over the past 20 years.

Williams and Campbell had little difficulty seeing off the faster bowlers but Kumble took only six balls to strike. Pushing forward, Williams was caught off pad and bat at silly point for 18. In his next over Campbell, playing across a leg break, was not to the pitch of the ball and skewed a lobbed catch to extra cover.

Lara entered to the customary royal reception from his fellow Trinidadians, of whom there were around 10,000 in the ground. But he was clearly not himself. Two days earlier he had damaged his silver grey Mercedes coupé and, while he said he was not shaken by the incident, he was obviously uncertain against the bowling.

Before he had scored, he drove his sixth ball low to mid-off from Kumble and a more alert fielder than the tall fast bowler Abey Kuruvilla would have made the catch. The Indians could not be too harsh on their errant fielder for Kuruvilla, as he had done in the first Test in Kingston, was a model of accuracy and helped Kumble maintain the pressure, conceding only five runs from his first spell of nine overs.

In any case his mistake was not costly, Lara's downfall immediately silencing the calypso music that throbbed around the stands between each over.

First day; West Indies won toss

WEST INDIES – First innings

S L Campbell c Prasad b Kumble	8
S C Williams c Dravid b Kumble	18
S Chanderpaul not out	18
B C Lara c Azharuddin b Joshi	14
C L Hooper not out	1
Extras (lb1, nb1)	2
Total (for 3)	61

Fall: 1-26, 2-29, 3-59.

To bat: R I C Holder, †J R Murray, C E L Ambrose, F A Rose, M Dillon, *C A Walsh.

Bowling: Prasad 8-3-27-0 (nb1); Kuruvilla 9-6-5-0; Kumble 9-1-24-2; Joshi 2-0-4-1.

INDIA: V V S Laxman, N S Sidhu, R S Dravid, *S R Tendulkar, S Ganguly, M Azharuddin, †N R Mongia, A Kumble, S Joshi, A Kuruvilla, K V Prasad.

Umpires: L Barker (WI) and S Randell (Aus). **Match referee:** P van der Merwe (SA).

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE

TODAY

Football

3.0 unless stated

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE: Altrincham v Bath City; Bromsgrove v Rushden & Diamonds; Halifax v Dover; Kettering v Telford; Macclesfield v Southport; Morecambe v Farnborough; Northwich v Gateshead; Slough v Hayes; Stevenage v Hednesford; Welling v Kidderminster; Woking v Stalybridge.

FA CARLSBERG VASE Semi-finals first leg: Banstead Athletic v Whitby Town; Guisborough Town v North Ferriby Utd.

ICIS LEAGUE Premier Division: Aylesbury v Harrow Borough; Bishop's Stortford v Purfleet; Bromley v Hitchin; Chertsey v Staines; Dagenham & Redbridge v Carshalton; Dulwich v St Albans; Grays v Kingstonian; Oxford City v Hendon; Sutton Utd v Enfield; Yeading v Heybridge; Yeovil v Boreham Wood. **First Division:** Barton Rovers v Canvey Island; Billericay v Uxbridge; Chesham Utd v Bognor Regis; Hampton v Aldershot; Maidenhead Utd v Basingstoke; Marlow v Croydon; Molesey v Wokingham; Thame v Tooting & Mitcham; Walton & Hersham v Abingdon Town; Whyteleafe v Leyton Pennant; Worthing v Berkhamsted. **Second Division:** Barking v Metropolitan Police; Bracknell v Collier Row & Romford; Cheshunt v Wembley; Dorking v Bedford; Edgware v Witham; Egham v Leighton; Hemel Hempstead v Horsham; Hungerford v Leatherhead; Ware v Tilbury; Wivenhoe v Windsor & Eton. **Third Division:** Aveley v Tring; Clapton v Braintree; Hornchurch v Hertford; Kingsbury v Harlow; Lewes v East Thurrock; Northwood v Epsom & Ewell; Southall v Flackwell Heath; Wingate & Finchley v Wealdstone.

UNIBOND LEAGUE Premier Division: Accrington Stanley v Boston Utd; Alfreton v Runcorn; Bamber Bridge v Marine; Bishop Auckland v Witton; Buxton v Colwyn Bay; Chorley v Lancaster; Emley v Winsford; Frickley v Guiseley; Knowsley v Blyth Spartans; Leek v Hyde; Spennymoor v Gainsborough. **First Division:** Ashton Utd v Harrogate Town; Bradford Park Avenue v Droylsden; Eastwood Town v Congleton; Farsley v Netherfield; Gretna v Worksop; Lincoln Utd v Leigh; Matlock v Workington; Stocksbridge v Flixton; Warrington v Curzon Ashton; Whitley Bay v Atherton LR.

DR MARTENS LEAGUE Premier Division: Ashford v Halesowen Town; Burton Albion v Chelmsford; Cambridge City v Salisbury; Crawley v Gloucester; Gravesend & Northfleet v *Nuneaton; Gresley Rovers v Baldock;* Hastings v Cheltenham; Merthyr Tydfil v Sittingbourne; Newport AFC v King's Lynn; Sudbury Town v Dorchester; Worcester v Atherstone. **Midland Division:** Bedworth v Hinckley Town; Dudley v Rothwell; Evesham v VS Rugby; Grantham v Tamworth; Moor Green v Corby; Raunds v Solihull Borough; Shepshed Dynamo v Ilkeston; Stourbridge v Bristol; Sutton Coldfield v Racing Club Warwick. **Southern Division:** Bashley v Weymouth; Dartford v Yate; Fareham v Fisher Athletic; Forest Green Rovers v St Leonards Stamcroft; Havant v Buckingham Town; Margate v Newport IoW; Tonbridge v Clevedon; Waterlooville v Cinderford, Weston-super-Mare v Fleet; Witney v Cirencester.

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE First Division: Beckenham v Corinthian; Canterbury v Hythe; Cray v Whitstable; Crockenhill v Folkestone; Deal v Chatham; Faversham v Tunbridge Wells; Furness v Sheppey; Greenwich Borough v Slade Green; Lordswood v Ramsgate; Thamesmead v Herne Bay.

UNIJET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE First Division: Horsham YMCA v Arundel; Mile Oak v Eastbourne Town; Pagham v Hailsham; Peacehaven & Telscombe v Three Bridges; Portfield v Burgess Hill; Ringmer v Oakwood; Saltdean v Southwick; Selsey v Langney; Shoreham v Whitehawk.

UHLSPORT UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Boston Town v St Neots; Eynesbury v Bourne; Ford Sports v Mirrlees Blackstone; Kempston v Cogenhoe; Long Buckby v Spalding; Stamford v Desborough; Stewarts & Lloyds Corby v Northampton Spencer; Stotfold v Holbeach; Wellingborough v Newport Pagnell; Wootton v Potton.

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE Premier Division: Bridport v Bristol Manor Farm; Brislington v Barnstaple; Calne v Mangotsfield; Chard v Taunton; Chippenham v Bridgwater; Elmore v Odd Down; Tiverton v Paulton; Westbury v Bideford.

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE Premier Division: Belper v Arnold; Brigg v Hallam; Denaby v Pickering; Hatfield Main v Glasshoughton Welfare; Hucknall v Pontefract Colliery; Ossett Albion v Ashfield; Selby v Armthorpe Welfare; Sheffield v Maltby MW; Thackley v Ossett Town.

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE First Division: Chadderton v Trafford; Clitheroe v Blackpool Rovers; Darwen v Nantwich; Glossop North End v Salford; Holker Old Boys v Burscough; Maine Road v Eastwood Hanley; Newcastle Town v Mossley; Penrith v Atherton Collieries; Rossendale v Bootle; St Helens v Kidsgrove; Vauxhall GM v Prescot Cables.

JEWSON WESSEX LEAGUE: Lymington v Gosport Borough; Totton v Wimborne; Aerostructures v Bournemouth FC; Brockenhurst v Cowes Sports; Christchurch v Downton; East Cowes Vics v Bemerton Heath; Petersfield v BAT Sports; Ryde Sports v Andover; Thatcham v Portsmouth RN.

JEWSON EASTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: Bury Town v Newmarket; Clacton v Wroxham; Fakenham v Gorleston; Soham v Felixstowe Port & Town; Sudbury Wanderers v Diss; Tiptree v Lowestoft; Warboys v Halstead; Wisbech v Stowmarket; Woodbridge v Watton.

INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND ALLIANCE: Blakenall v Stapenhill; Bridgnorth v Oldbury; Hinckley Athletic v Shifnal; Knypersley Victoria v Halesowen Harriers; Pelsall Villa v Rocester; Pershore v Boldmere St Michaels; Rushall Olympic v Barwell; Sandwell Borough v Chasetown; Willenhall v Stratford.

FEDERATION BREWERY NORTHERN LEAGUE First Division: Bedlington Terriers v Dunston Federation Brewery; Crook v Chester-le-Street; Durham v Stockton; Morpeth v Consett; Murton v Seaham Red Star; RTM Newcastle v Tow Law; Shildon v West Auckland; South Shields v Billingham Synthonia; Whickham v Easington.

LEAGUE OF WALES: Briton Ferry v Rhyl; Caernarfon v Aberystwyth (2.30); Caersws v Holywell; Cemaes Bay v Newtown; Connah's Quay v Welshpool; Conwy v Ton Pentre; Ebbw Vale v Cwmbran (12.0); Llansantffraid v Bangor City (2.0); Porthmadog v Carmarthen.

PRESS & JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE: Brora Rangers v Nairn County; Deveronvale v Peterhead; Elgin City v Lossiemouth; Fort William v Buckie Thistle; Fraserburgh v Huntly; Keith v Clachnacuddin; Rothes v Cove Rangers.

McEWAN'S LAGER NORTH CUP Semi-final replay: Forres Mechanics v Wick Academy.

BASS IRISH CUP Quarter-finals: Cliftonville v Crusaders; Glentoran v Coagh Utd; Loughgall v Coleraine; Omagh v Limavady.

***HARP LAGER NATIONAL LEAGUE OF IRELAND* Premier Division:** Finn Harps v Dundalk (7.30); Sligo Rovers v Bray Wanderers (7.30).

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division: Arsenal v Crystal Palace.

Rugby Union

3.0 unless stated

FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP

France v Scotland (2.0)
(at Parc des Princes, Paris)
Wales v England
(at Cardiff Arms Park).

COURAGE CLUBS' CHAMPIONSHIP National League Three: Exeter v Morley; Harrogate v Redruth; Leeds v Lydney; London Welsh v Walsall; Otley v Liverpool St Helens; Reading v Havant; Rosslyn Park v Fylde; Wharfedale v Clifton. **National League Four North:** Aspatria v Nuneaton; Hereford v Stoke-on-Trent; Lichfield v Birmingham/Solihull; Preston Grasshoppers v Kendal; Sandal v Worcester; Sheffield v Stourbridge; Winnington Park v Manchester. **National League Four South:** Cheltenham v Newbury; Metropolitan Police v Barking; North Walsham v Plymouth; Tabard v Askeans; Weston-super-Mare v High Wycombe.

INSURANCE CORPORATION IRISH LEAGUE First Division (2.30): Blackrock College v Shannon; Dungannon v Old Crescent; Garryowen v Lansdowne; Old Belvedere v Cork Constitution; Old Wesley v St Mary's College; Terenure Coll v Instonians; Young Munster v Ballymena. **Second Division (2.30):** Clontarf v Monkstown; DLSP v Bective Rangers; Derry v Sunday's Well; Dolphin v Skerries; Greystones v NIFC; Malone v Highfield; Wanderers v UCC.

CLUB MATCHES: Blackheath v Saracens (1.0); Oxford Univ v Waseda Univ (5.45); Preston Lodge v West of Scotland (12.0); Orrell v Coventry; Melrose v Langholm.

Hockey

HOME QUAD YOUTH TOURNAMENT (Milton Keynes): Under 16: Wales v Ireland (10.0); England v Scotland (2.0). **Under 18:** Ireland v Wales (12.0); England v Scotland (2.0).

NATIONAL LEAGUE First Division: Beeston v Bromley (1.30); Blueharts v Bournville (2.0); Hull v Trojans (2.0); Indian Gymkhana v Brooklands (1.30); Isca v City of Portsmouth (12.30); Lewes v Crostyx (1.30); Oxford Univ v Edgbaston (12.0); Sheffield v Firebrands (2.0); St Albans v Harleston Magpies (2.0); Stourport v Warrington (2.0).

NASTRO AZZURRO SOUTH Premier: Old Whitgiftians v Spencer.

NORTH PREMIER First Division: Harrogate v Ben Rhydding; Norton v Sheffield Bankers; Ramgarhia v Springfields; Southport v Formby; Swalwell v Neston; Timperley v Chester.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE Premier: Balsam Leicester v Trojans (12.30); Clifton v Slough (12.30); Doncaster v Ipswich (12.0); Sutton Coldfield v Hightown (11.30). **First Division:** Bradford Swithenbank v Chelmsford Broadoak; Olton v Canterbury (2.0); Sunderland Bedans v Blueharts (12.30); Wimbledon v Bracknell (12.0). **Second Division:** Loughborough Students v Ealing (2.30); Old Loughtonians v St Albans (1.0); West Witney v Sherwood (12.0); Woking v Exmouth (2.0).

WOMEN'S SOUTH First Division: Dulwich v Reading; Horsham v Tulse Hill; Southampton v City of Portsmouth; Winchmore Hill v Winchester; Worthing v Hampstead & Westminster.

WOMEN'S TRYSPORTS THREE COUNTIES LEAGUE First Division: Amersham v Bracknell; City of Oxford v Maidenhead; Milton Keynes v Reading; Newbury v Farnham Common; Oxford Univ v Wycombe Wye; Ranelagh v Sonning; West Witney v Henley; Wokingham v Slough.

ROYAL AL-FAISAL WOMEN'S MIDLAND Premier: Aldridge v Balsam Leicester; Bedford v Pickwick; Crimson Ramblers v West Bromwich; North Staffs v Hampton-in-Arden.

WOMEN'S EAST SUPER LEAGUE Premier: Bedeyheath v Cambridge City; Harleston Magpies v Sevenoaks; Ipswich v Ashford; Welwyn Garden City v Bury St Edmunds.

WOMEN'S WEST Premier: Cheltenham v St Austell; Exeter v Wimborne Wayfarers; Redland v Leominster; Yate v Colwall.

WOMEN'S NORTH First Division: Blackburn v Sheffield; Liverpool v Chester; Poynton v Welton; York v Carlisle.

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Derby Storm v Manchester Giants (7.30); Leicester Riders v Crystal Palace (7.30); Thames Valley Tigers v Leopards (8.0); Worthing Bears v Hemel & Watford Royals (8.0).

NATIONAL LEAGUE Men's First Division: Bury & Bolton v Nottingham (7.30); Cardiff v Brixton (8.0); Coventry v Liverpool (7.30); Guildford v Stockton (8.0); Solent v M-1 Sussex (8.0); Westminster v Plymouth (8.0). **Women's First Division:** Barking & Dagenham v Rhondda (8.0); Birmingham v Nottingham (4.0); Harlesden v Spelthorne (7.0); London v Crystal Palace (6.0); Thames Valley v Ipswich (5.45).

Ice hockey

SUPERLEAGUE Play-offs: Group A: Ayr Scottish Eagles v Newcastle Cobras (6.30). **Group B:** Bracknell Bees v Nottingham Panthers (6.30); Sheffield Steelers v Basingstoke Bison (6.35).

PREMIER LEAGUE: Guildford Flames v Kingston Hawks (6.0); Slough Jets v Solihull Blaze (6.30); Swindon IceLords v Telford Tigers (5.30).

NORTHERN PREMIER Play-offs second round: Fife Flyers v Whitley Warriors (7.15); Paisley Pirates v Blackburn Hawks (7.0). **Shield Tournament:** Murrayfield Royals v Peterborough Pirates (7.0).

Speedway

SPEEDWAY STAR CUP: Coventry v Swindon (7.30).

Other sports

BADMINTON: Yonex All-England Open Championships (NIA, Birmingham).

RALLYING: Welsh Rally.

SWIMMING: British Grand Prix meet (Cardiff).

TABLE TENNIS: English Championships (Brighton).

TOMORROW

Football

UNIBOND LEAGUE First Division: Workington v Bradford Park Avenue (3.0).

DR MARTENS LEAGUE Southern Division: St Leonards Stamcroft v Waterlooville (3.0).

LEAGUE OF WALES: Inter Cable-Tel Cardiff v Flint (3.0).

HARP LAGER NATIONAL LEAGUE OF IRELAND Premier Division: Bohemians v Derry City (3.15); Cork City v Shelbourne (2.0); University College Dublin v St Patrick's Athletic (3.15).

Rugby League

STONES SUPER LEAGUE: Leeds v Oldham; London v St Helens (6.35); Salford v Castleford; Sheffield v Paris (3.15); Wigan v Halifax. **First Division:** Featherstone v Swinton (3.30); Huddersfield v Keighley (3.30); Hull v Widnes (3.15); Wakefield v Whitehaven (3.30). **Second Division:** Carlisle v York (3.0); Hunslet v Leigh (3.30); Prescot v Doncaster; Rochdale v Lancashire Lynx.

Rugby Union

COURAGE CLUBS' CHAMPIONSHIP (3.0): National League Two: Newcastle v Nottingham. **National League Four South:** Camberley v Charlton Park; Henley v Berry Hill.

WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE First Division: Ebbw Vale v Dunvant (2.30).

ANGLO-WELSH SECOND DIVISION COMPETITION: Group D: Bonymaen v Rotherham (2.30).

Hockey

HOME QUAD YOUTH TOURNAMENT (Milton Keynes): Under 16: Wales v Scotland (9.30); England v Ireland (11.30). **Under 18:** Scotland v Wales (1.30); England v Ireland (3.30).

NATIONAL LEAGUE Premier: Surbiton v Old Loughtonians (2.30). **First Division:** Stourport v Oxford Hawks (2.30).

AEWHA CUP Fifth round: Chelmsford v Canterbury (12.45); Crimson Ramblers v Aldridge (2.0); Doncaster v Woking (2.0); Hightown v Trojans (12.30); Ipswich v Olton (12.0); Slough v Balsam Leicester (12.0); Sutton Coldfield v Cheam (11.30); Wimbledon v Clifton (1.0).

AEWHA PLATE Fourth round: Chiltern v Harrow (2.0); City of Portsmouth v Camberley (2.0); Deeside Ramblers v Reading (1.0); Driffield v Aldershot & Farnham (4.0); Leominster v Yate & South Gloucester (1.0); Poynton v Springfield (2.0); Sevenoaks v York (2.0); St Ives v Bath (1.30).

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Birmingham Bullets v London Towers (7.0); Chester Jets v Sheffield Sharks (6.0); Crystal Palace v Worthing Bears (7.0).

NATIONAL LEAGUE Men's First Division: Mid Sussex v Westminster (3.0); Ware v Oxford (4.0). **Women's First Division:** Sheffield v Northampton (2.0); Thames Valley v Rhondda (2.30).

Ice hockey

SUPERLEAGUE Play-offs: Group A: Cardiff Devils v Newcastle Cobras (6.30); Manchester Storm v Ayr Scottish Eagles (6.0). **Group B:** Basingstoke Bison v Sheffield Steelers (6.0).

PREMIER LEAGUE: Kingston Hawks v Swindon IceLords (5.45); Solihull Blaze v Slough Jets (7.0); Telford Tigers v Guildford Flames (5.30).

NORTHERN PREMIER Play-offs second round: Blackburn Hawks v Fife Flyers (6.0); Whitley Warriors v Paisley Pirates (6.30). **Shield Tournament:** Peterborough Pirates v Murrayfield Royals (5.30).

Speedway

SPEEDWAY STAR CUP: Swindon v Coventry (6.0).

Other sports

CYCLING: Grand Prix of Essex (Halstead).

SWIMMING: British Grand Prix meet (Cardiff).

TABLE TENNIS: English Championships (Brighton).

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

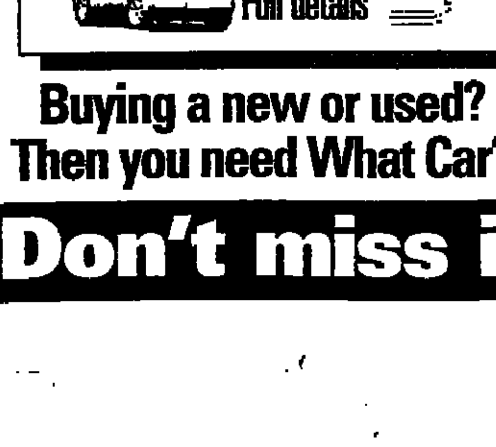
■ I don't know how old I was at the start of the game, but I'm 93 now. It was a long, long time watching my team keep Wimbledon out. It was like 120 years in Alcatraz. **Martin O'Neill**, Leicester manager, after his team's Coca-Cola Cup semi-final away-goals victory.

■ What we've got to remember is that we could quite easily have gone out to Colwyn Bay in the first round. **Brian Flynn**, manager of Wrexham, beaten FA Cup quarter-finalists.

■ I didn't see what had happened to him. Our mirrors don't see that far back. **Michael Schumacher** on Damon Hill's parade-lap exit from the Australian Grand Prix.

■ What is going on? Is this the first day back at school or what? **Martin Brundle**, ITV analyst, on the first-lap chaos in Melbourne.

■ I get funny highs. It is wearing off already. Scotland's footballers winning a World Cup match would last longer. **David Coulthard**, Australian Grand Prix winner, asked how he felt after the race.



Buying a new or used? Then you need What Car?

Don't miss it

HEREFORD

HYPERION

2.20 Proud Image 2.55 Scottish Bambi 3.25 Added Dimension 4.00 Chip'N'Run 4.30 Kadari 5.00 Northern Singer 5.30 Noddadante

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places).
■ Right-hand course with 300yd run-in.
■ Course is N of city on A49. Hereford station 1m. **ADMISSION:** Club £12; Tattersalls £8; Course Enclosure £5. **CAR PARK:** Free.

SIS

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Still Here (2.20); Menelave (3.25); Kentucky Gold (5.30).
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Dr Rocket (2.55) won at Taunton on Monday; Chip'N'Run (4.00) won a point-to-point on Saturday; First Harvest (4.00) won a point-to-point on Saturday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Ernest Aragon (2.20) sent 172 miles by Mrs S Lamyman from Louth, Lincs; Added Dimension (3.25) sent 134 miles by P Winkworth from Dunsfold, Surrey; Still Here (2.20), Lady Of Mine (5.30) & Young Tess (5.30) sent 116 miles by P Bowen from Haverfordwest, Dyfed.

2.20 MARCH NOVICE SELLING HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,400 added 2m 1f

1	3132	PROUD IMAGE (21) (BF) G McCourt 5 11 7 ....J Osborne
2		BOOT JACK P Rich 8 11 1 ....W Marston
3	04/-	CORPORATE IMAGE (1129) T Hind 7 11 1 ....P McLoughlin
4	P0-PRP0	ERNEST ARAGORN (32) Mrs S Lamyman 8 11 1 Derek Byrne V
5	0F	ESPLA (32) J Moore 6 11 1 ....W McFarland
6	663-000	HANGING GROVE (9) P Murphy 7 11 1 ....Sophie Mitchell (3)
7	00/P00-	KARIBU (GER) (357) I Bennett 6 11 1 ....L Harvey
8	0P	NOQUITA (NZ) (88) J McCormiche 10 11 1 ....X Aizpuru (7)
9	50/-0523	SHARP THRILL (118) B Smart 6 11 1 ....C Llewellyn
10	36/336-5	SLANEY RASHER (262) B Llewellyn 10 11 1 Mr J L Llewellyn
11	4030/P/-	VITAL WONDER (682) J Parfitt 9 11 1 ....M Griffiths (7)
12	PP	A BADGE TOO FAR (16) Mrs L Williamson 7 10 10 R Bellamy
13		AMANY D Burchell 5 10 10 ....D J Burchell
14	05-00	VITA NUOVA (10) W Jenks 6 10 10 ....V Slattery
15	4F	EL BARDADOR (10) R Hodges 4 10 7 ....T Dascombe (3)
16	20000	STILL HERE (5) P Bowen 4 10 7 ....Mr R Thornton (5) B

– 16 declared –

BETTING: 15-8 Proud Image, 100-30 Hanging Grove, 9-2 Still Here, 13-2 El Bardador, 10-1 Slaney Rasher, 12-1 Amany, Sharp Thrill, 16-1 Boot Jack, Vita Nuova, 20-1 others

2.55 NEWENT HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m

1	212P13	SCOTTISH BAMBI (7) (CD) (BF) P Webber 9 11 10 J Osborne
2	006P-P5	MONDAY CLUB (105) (CD) J Tuck 13 11 0 ....R Bellamy
3	313366	NORTHERN OPTIMIST (115) (D) (BF) B Llewellyn 9 10 1 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
4	2/5315-	CORPUS (666) (D) R Hodges 8 10 0 ....T Dascombe (3)
5	235201	DR ROCKET (5) (CD) R Dickin 12 10 0 ....X Aizpuru (7) V

– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Corpus 9st 8lb, Dr Rocket 9st 5lb.
BETTING: 11-8 Scottish Bambi, 5-2 Dr Rocket, 4-1 Northern Optimist, 8-1 Corpus, 10-1 Monday Club

3.25 BOSBURY HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,650 added 2m 1f

1	6-03111	ADDED DIMENSION (17) (CD) P Winkworth 6 11 10 X Aizpuru (7)
2	13-1635	MENELAVE (29) O Sherwood 7 11 6 ....J Osborne B
3	2F4-036	SCHNOZZLE (87) K Bridgwater 6 10 8 ....R Massey (3)
4	1/2322-0	VA UTU (17) (D) D Lloyd 9 10 0 ....Sophie Mitchell (3)
5	4-00003	THE BREWER (23) J Tuck 5 10 0 ....R Bellamy

– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Va Utu 9st 13lb, The Brewer 9st 4lb.
BETTING: FORECAST: 5-4 Added Dimension, 2-1 Menelave, 9-2 Schnozzle, 8-1 The Brewer, 14-1 Va Utu

4.00 CHARLIE KNIPE HUNTER CHASE (CLASS H) £1,800 added 3m 1f 110yds

1	4P/42P-1	HIGHWAY FIVE (10) (CD) S Brooke 9 12 7 ..Miss E James (7)
2	U/21-U	WHAT A TO DO (9) C Sweeting 13 12 4 ..Miss L Sweeting (7)
3	/PUF/P-	CHIP'N'RUN (301) Ms M Teague 11 12 0 ....Mr J Comes (7)
4	3P/45-	FIRST HARVEST (322) Patrick J Hanly 10 12 0 Mr P Hanly (7)
5	045/P6-5	GAY RUFFIAN (16) (C) Mrs D Dyson 11 12 0 Miss C Dyson (7)
6	/4P60-6	KINGFISHER BAY (16) (D) O Utte 12 12 0 Mr G Shenkin (7)
7	0PP6U-4	ORTON HOUSE (10) S Kelly 10 12 0 ....Mr R Burton (7)
8		PRINCE OF VERONA T H Martin 10 12 0 ...Mr R Sweeting (7)
9	4U33P-2	TEATRADER (10) Miss T Blazey 11 12 0 ....Miss T Blazey (7)
10	P	THE RUM MARINER (33) J Skelton 10 12 0 Mr R Thornton (5)
11	2FFP11/-	PENLEA LADY (677) Mrs S Addinsell 10 11 9 ..Mr S Lloyd (7)

– 11 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Chip'N'Run, 4-1 Teatrader, 5-1 Prince Of Verona, 11-2 What A To Do, 7-1 First Harvest, 8-1 Highway Five, Penlea Lady, 10-1 The Rum Mariner, 14-1 Orton House, 20-1 others

4.30 TEME HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,650 added mares 2m 3f 110yds

1	201F-20	JOSIFINA (87) A Foster 6 11 12 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
2	F4P001	SWING QUARTET (8) N Twiston-Davies 7 10 9 ....C Llewellyn
3	544263	KADARI (22) W Clay 8 10 4 ....Guy Lewis (3) V
4	40063-6	SEVSO (17) (C) R Baker 8 10 0 ....V Slattery
5	504	PRECIOUS ISLAND (21) P Dalton 4 10 0 ....B Fenton

– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Sevso 9st 13lb, Precious Island 9st 7lb.
BETTING: evens Swing Quartet, 9-4 Kadari, 9-2 Josifina, 9-1 Sevso, 14-1 Precious Island

5.00 MALVERN NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,100 added 2m

1	3311/P1	NORTHERN SINGER (17) (D) R Hodges 7 12 0 ..T Dascombe (3)
2	00-4541	QUICK QUOTE (12) (D) Mrs I McKie 7 11 3 ....L Harvey
3	PP-1U54	TENAYESTELIGN (16) (D) D Marks 9 11 3 ..Mr R Thornton (5)
4	0/P00-P	JASONS FARM (10) W Clay 7 11 2 ....Guy Lewis (3)
5	P04004	QUICK DECISION (46) J Cresswell 6 11 2 ....N T Egan (7)
6	6P00-3U	RELAXED LAD (10) J Peacock 8 11 2 ....R Bellamy
7	0F	WHOD OF THOUGHT IT (32) P Channings 6 11 2 ....B Fenton
8	/0PP-04	QUEENS CURATE (12) Mrs E Scott 10 10 11 ....B Powell

– 8 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Northern Singer, 5-2 Quick Quote, 7-2 Tenayestelign, 10-1 Quick Decision, 14-1 Jasons Farm, 16-1 Relaxed Lad, 20-1 others

5.30 LEVY BOARD NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,800 added 3m 2f

1	342515	COPPER COIL (35) W Turner 7 11 13 ....I Power (7)
2	3-341/3F	LORD NITROGEN (85) B Llewellyn 7 11 7 ....Mr J L Llewellyn
3	3/33-56	PROFESSOR PAGE (14) T Thomson Jones 7 11 3 ..X Aizpuru (7)
4	60404	COOLE CHERRY (8) C Barwell 7 10 11 ....B Fenton
5	3-8001P	SAMMORELLO (16) (CD) N T-Davies 6 10 6 ....C Llewellyn
6	5502-50	YOUNG TESS (115) P Bowen 7 10 5 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
7	P0051	SPITFIRE BRIDGE (8) G McCourt 5 10 4 ....R Hobson (7)
8	0001	NODDADANTE (12) N Mitchell 7 10 2 ....Sophie Mitchell (3)
9	62-3434	MANOR BOUND (144) Mrs S Williams 7 10 0 ....R Massey (3)
10	0-0640	BROWN WREN (30) P Hobbs 6 10 0 ....G Tormey
11	0P-P552	CRAVATE (FR) (26) P Hobbs 7 10 0 ....M Moran (7)
12	P00	LADY OF MINE (16) P Bowen 7 10 0 ....W Marston
13	0/-0000P	NORDIC FLIGHT (10) R Eckley 9 10 0 ....V Slattery HB
14	0-000PP	KENTUCKY GOLD (22) Mrs L Williamson 8 10 0 ....L O'Hara B
15	P-465FP	PENNANT COTTAGE (36) W Jenks 9 10 0 ....R Bellamy
16	P0/-00P0	SEMINOLE WIND (12) C Barwell 6 10 0 ....B Powell V
17	0P00	BROWNSCROFT (16) Miss P Whittle 9 10 0 ....

– 17 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Manor Bound 9st 13lb, Brown Wren 9st 11lb, Cravate 9st 10lb, Lady Of Mine 9st 6lb, Nordic Flight 9st 5lb, Kentucky Gold 9st 4lb, Pennant Cottage 9st 2lb, Seminole Wind 9st 1lb, Brownscroft 9st.
BETTING: 7-2 Spitfire Bridge, 9-2 Copper Coil, 11-2 Noddadante, 6-1 Professor Page, 7-1 Cravate, Sammorello, 9-1 Coole Cherry, 10-1 Brown Wren, 12-1 Manor Bound, Young Tess, 14-1 Lady Of Mine, Lord Nitrogen, 20-1 others

WOLVERHAMPTON

HYPERION

7.00 Big Bang 7.30 English Invader 8.00 Noufari 8.30 Tinkerbell 9.00 Hannahs Usher 9.30 Loch Style

GOING: Standard.
STALLS: 7f – outside; rest – inside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: High from 6f to 1m 4f.
■ Fibresand, left-hand, oval course.
■ Course is N of town on A449. Wolverhampton station 1m. **ADMISSION:** Club £15; Tattersalls £6 (OAP members of Diamond Club £4); Viewing Restaurant £25.90 including entrance and meal. **CAR PARK:** free.

SIS

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Night Harmony (visored) (9.00).
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Shontaine (9.00) won Lingfield on Wednesday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Dictation (9.00) sent 181 miles by J J O'Neill from Skelton Wood End, Cumbria; Elly Fleetfoot (7.30) sent 178 miles by G L Moore from Woodingdean, E Sussex; Dr Edgar (7.30) sent 162 miles by M Dods from Piercebridge, Co. Durham; Hazel (7.00) sent 156 miles by Miss Gay Kelleway from Whitcombe, Dorset; Zorba (7.00) & Secret Service (8.00) sent 140 miles by C Thornton from Middleham, North Yorkshire; Cee-N-K (8.30) & Shontaine (9.00) sent 140 miles by M Johnston from Middleham, North Yorkshire; Random Kindness (8.00) sent 130 miles by R Ingram Epsom, Surrey; Hever Golf Charger (8.30) & Hever Golf Eagle (9.30) sent 130 miles by T J Naughton from Epsom, Surrey.

7.00 MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES (CLASS E) £4,000 added 1m 1f 79yds

1	/0	RONUS MAGIC E Alston 4 9 10 ....K Fallon 3
2	500-330	HAZEL (51) Miss Gay Kelleway 5 9 5 ....D Holland 6 B
3	25-03	SOUNDS LEGAL (18) P Evans 4 9 5 ....J F Egan 5
4	60-3	BIG BANG (17) M Blanshard 3 8 5 ....J Quinn 4
5	00-	RONQUISTA D'OR (144) G Ham 3 8 5 ....S Drowne 7
6	324-242	ZORBA (24) (BF) C Thornton 3 8 5 ....Dean McKeown 2
7	45	CRACKERBOX (14) H Akbary 3 8 0 ....R Ffrench (7) 1
8	336334	WINDBORN (14) C Allen 3 8 0 ....Martin Dwyer (3) 8

– 8 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 Big Bang, 9-4 Zorba, 4-1 Hazel, 8-1 Sounds Legal, 10-1 Windborn, 12-1 Crackerbox, 33-1 others

7.30 CHORISTER CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F) £4,000 added 1m 4f

1	50-0325	DR EDGAR (26) M Dods 5 9 4 ....A Clark 1
2		SOMMERSBY Mrs N Macauley 6 9 2 ....J Quinn 8
3	300-140	FRESH FRUIT DAILY (26) P Kelleway 5 9 1 Angela Gallimore (7) 9
4	0-41341	ENGLISH INVADER (11) (D) C Dwyer 6 9 0 ....K Fallon 3
5	560-004	CARROLLS MARC (23) (CD) C Murray 9 8 8 ..P McCabe (3) 7
6	232000-	ELLY FLEETFOOT (178) G L Moore 5 8 8 ....S Whitworth 4
7	13-6353	HONESTLY (18) (C) B Smart 4 8 5 ....R Perham 2
8	0-45534	LAHIK (18) K Ivory 4 8 4 ....Martin Dwyer (3) 6
9	05040-4	IN THE BAND (18) Lord Huntingdon 4 8 3 ..Dale Gibson 10 V
10	0-00065	EFFICACIOUS (10) P Eccles 4 7 13 ....J Bramhill (5) 8 B

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 11-8 English Invader, 100-30 In The Band, 6-1 Dr Edgar, 8-1 Honestly, Fresh Fruit Daily, 10-1 Sommersby, 12-1 Lahik, 14-1 Elly Fleetfoot, 20-1 Carrolls Marc, 33-1 Efficacious

■ Allen Paulson has played down the possibility of cloning Cigar. And the American Jockey Club stressed that if Cigar were to be cloned any resulting offspring would most likely be barred from racing.

8.00 HARTSHORNE MOTOR LIMITED STAKES (CLASS E) £4,000 added 2m 46yds

1	05-32	NOUFARI (59) (C) R Hollinshead 6 9 2 ....F Lynch (3) 6
2	403344-	PARADISE NAVY (108) (D) C Egerton 8 9 2 Sophie Mitchell (5) 4 B
3	330500-	SECRET SERVICE (147) C Thornton 5 9 2 ..Dean McKeown 5
4	116-405	MONTECRISTO (10) R Guest 4 8 11 ....Dane O'Neill 1
5	20-5222	RANDOM KINDNESS (30) (BF) R Ingram 4 8 11 .S Whitworth 3
6	5663-60	STATE APPROVAL (58) (C) P Eccles 4 8 11 ..J Bramhill (5) 2

– 6 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Secret Service, 5-2 Noufari, 4-1 Random Kindness, 5-1 Paradise Navy, 8-1 Montecristo, 25-1 State Approval

8.30 CHESTERS HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,400 added 3YO 7f

1	42621-0	CEE-N-K (10) M Johnston 9 7 ....D Holland 2
2	5-1	COLD STEEL (66) (CD) W Jarvis 9 6 ....W Ryan 7
3	365121	ENCHANTING EVE (14) (C) (D) C Allen 8 13 Martin Dwyer (3) 3
4	3001-20	KOMASTA (58) (CD) Capt J Wilson 8 8 ....K Fallon 5
5	22256-6	TINKERBELL (10) (CD) W Muir 8 6 ....Dane O'Neill 4 V
6	6-52212	HEVER GOLF CHARGER (18) (D) T J Naughton 8 4 T Sprake 1
7	033-20	PATINA (65) R Hollinshead 7 12 ....J Quinn 6

– 7 declared –

BETTING: 15-8 Cold Steel, 4-1 Cee-N-K, 5-1 Patina, 6-1 Komasta, Enchanting Eve, 7-1 Tinkerbell, 14-1 Hever Golf Charger

9.00 WHITE HEAD SELLING HANDICAP (CLASS F) £4,000 added 6f

1	346010	LITTLE IBNR (10) (CD) P Evans 6 9 10 ....J F Egan 6
2	600600-	HANNAHS USHER (236) (CD) C Murray 5 9 8 Nicola Howarth 12
3	532501	BOLD ARISTOCRAT (19) (D) R Hollinshead 6 9 4F Lynch (3) 7
4	66-4001	SHONTAINE (2) (D) M Johnston 4 9 2 (6ex) ....D Holland 4
5	425340	NIGHT HARMONY (24) Miss S Wilton 4 8 13 S Whitworth 2 V
6	3-22552	HOH MAJESTIC (19) (BF) R Thompson 4 8 10 ..J Bramhill (5) 13 V
7	336520	FEATHERSTONE LANE (10) (C) Miss L Siddall 6 8 8 D R McCabe 5 V
8	406-140	AMY LEIGH (36) (C) Capt J Wilson 4 8 6 ....K Fallon 11 B
9	000-003	LOCHON (10) (D) Mrs N Macauley 6 8 5 Jo Hunnam (7) 10 V
10	000-03	DICTATION (USA) (19) J O'Neill 5 8 3 ....J Quinn 1
11	0046-56	APPEAL AGAIN (43) D Burchell 4 7 11 ....N Carlisle 8
12	00000-0	NITEOWL RAIDER (19) (CD) John A Harris 4 7 10 J O'Reilly 9
13	064-546	MARGARETROSE ANNA (10) B Baugh 5 7 10 Jane Wands (7) 9

– 13 declared –

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. True handicap weight: Margaretrose Anna 7st 5lb.
BETTING: 4-1 Shontaine, 9-2 Bold Aristocrat, 5-1 Hoh Majestic, 6-1 Dictation, 8-1 Lochon, 9-1 Little Ibnr, 10-1 Featherstone Lane, 12-1 Night Harmony, Amy Leigh, 16-1 Margaretrose Anna, 20-1 others

9.30 TOMS HANDICAP (CLASS E) £4,000 added 1m 1f 79yds

1	012210-	ANGEL FACE (USA) (74) P Evans 4 10 0 ....J F Egan 7
2	16000-4	ETHBAAT (USA) (11) (C) M Heaton-Ellis 6 9 12 ....A Clark 11
3	/2421/-4	VENICE BEACH (10) C Brooks 5 9 10 ....I D Smith (3) 12
4	41-6123	CHADLEIGH LANE (19) (C) A Mulholland 5 9 10 Dean McKeown 13
5	00-3105	SWEET SUPPOSIN (11) (CD) C Dwyer 6 9 9 Jo Hunnam (7) 6 V
6	5-30431	SUGA HAWK (14) (CD) E Alston 5 9 7 ....K Fallon 8
7	0250-23	DRAGONJOY (14) (C) (BF) N Littmoden 4 9 3 D Griffiths (5) 5 V
8	3662-00	OBELOS (USA) (24) Miss S Wilton 6 9 3 ....S Whitworth 1 V
9	2520-36	GOLDEN TOUCH (52) (C) (D) D Cosgrove 5 9 3 ..M Fenton 3
10	4615-04	RIVAL BID (14) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 9 9 1 ....J Quinn 9 V
11	58-1000	LOCH STYLE (22) (C) R Hollinshead 4 8 12 ....F Lynch (3) 4
12	003-201	HEVER GOLF EAGLE (18) T Naughton 4 8 9 ..Dane O'Neill 2
13	406400-	BACKHANDER (208) R Phillips 5 8 8 ....S Drowne 4

– 13 declared –

BETTING: 100-30 Suga Hawk, 11-2 Dragonjoy, 13-2 Angel Face, 7-1 Hever Golf Eagle, 8-1 Rival Bid, Chadleigh Lane, 10-1 Sweet Supposin, Ethbaat, 12-1 Venice Beach, 14-1 Loch Style, Golden Touch, 20-1 others

هكذا من الأصل

O'Shea cautious about aiming Ballistic at Aintree

Racing

GREG WOOD

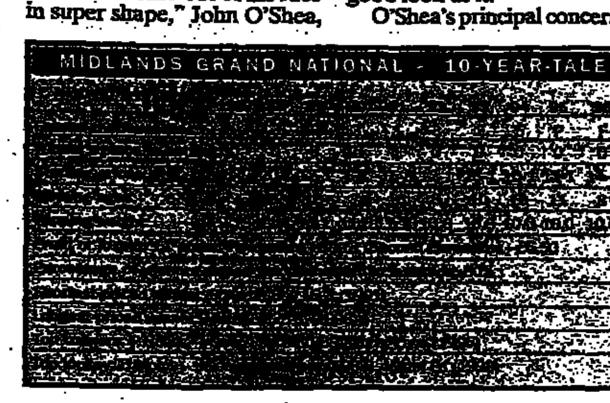
It is a sign of the delicate balance within a racing programme built up over two centuries that change in one small area will quickly be felt elsewhere. Just six years ago, significant alterations were made to the Grand National course at Aintree in order to benefit the safety of the participants, but already one race which previously offered only rare clues to the National has overtaken any number of others to become the most important Liverpool trial of all. It is also quite a significant event in its own right: the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

No longer are horses good enough to find the frame in the Gold Cup considered too good to risk at Aintree. As Mr Mulligan passed the post at Cheltenham two days ago, far-sighted punters were focused on horses running on from off the pace, and one in particular caught everyone's eye. Go Ballistic, fourth on Thursday, would not have made up more ground from the home turn if he had been driving a sports car. With just 9st 8lb in the long handicap for Liverpool, and every chance that the weights will rise sufficiently to get him into the handicap proper, his National chance was suddenly obvious to backers and bookies alike, with William Hill so impressed that he was cut to 10-1 second-favourite behind Lord Gyllene, a runner in today's Midlands Grand National at Uttoxeter.

As yet, though, Go Ballistic is just a probable, rather than definite runner at Aintree. "The horse has come out of his race in super shape," John O'Shea, his trainer, said yesterday, "and there would be no problem with him being ready to run at National time, but I would just like to take a week to think it over. His only other option is the Whitbread, and as the weights are already out for the National, we'll have to have a good look at it."

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Shanagore Warrior
(Lingfield 4.45)
NB: Garrylough
(Uttoxeter 3.00)

O'Shea's principal concern is that, at just eight years of age, Go Ballistic might lack the necessary maturity for chasing's most gruelling event. "The trip won't be a problem," O'Shea said. "The idea behind running him in the Gold Cup was that on any other track he wouldn't get a blow in against One Man, but I knew that if he could keep tabs on him then his stamina would come into play. Maybe he ought to wait another year, but then we thought that before the Gold Cup, and he was in such good form that I let him run, because you never know what next year will bring."



The expectation must be that Go Ballistic will be behind the Aintree tapes in three weeks' time, but a former ante-post favourite for the race, Coome Hill, was definitely ruled out yesterday. "He's got sore shins and it will keep him off for a while," Walter Dennis, whose runner was a forlorn seventh of the eight Gold Cup finishers, said yesterday. "That wasn't his true form. Jamie Osborne said he gurgled at the top of the hill and with the ground as firm as it was he let him come home in his own time."

Danoli is reported by Tom Foley to be fine after his Gold Cup fall and, like Mr Mulligan, started his well-earned summer holiday yesterday. "He's good and sound," Noel Chance, Mr Mulligan's trainer, said yesterday. "He's got a few cuts and abrasions but it's a long way from his heart. He's a serious horse."

Just how serious a horse Lord Gyllene is should become apparent shortly before two o'clock today. The 8-1 Grand National favourite with Ladbrokes will carry top weight in the Midlands Grand National, the feature event on a Uttoxeter card which, for all the efforts of the track's ambitious managers, will always struggle against punters' Festival hangovers.

Lord Gyllene won the Singer & Friedlander National Trial over course and distance last month, to the delight of Stan Clarke, his owner, who is also Uttoxeter's chairman. He is now creeping up the ratings, however, and may struggle to give weight to SEVEN TOWERS (nap 1.50), another improver. Thursday Night (next best 1.15) may help to ease the pain after Thursday afternoon.

Holiday snap: Mr Mulligan, the Gold Cup winner, yesterday begins a break from the track after his arduous Cheltenham success Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

Judicious Captain to be popular order at 14-1

FIRST SHOW

How they bet on today's televised races

Country Store is a top-priced 16-1 with the Tote – William Hill go 12-1 – for the novice handicap chase at Uttoxeter (12.45). Judicious Captain is 14-1 (Ladbrokes – the Tote go 8-1 – for the 2.25 at Uttoxeter. In the Midlands Grand National Handicap Chase (2.25) Sister Stephanie is 12-1 (Coral/Ladbrokes – the Tote go 8-1.

Ian Davies

Uttoxeter 12.45

Horse	William Hill	Tote
Goldenswift	100-30	3-1
Sail By The Stars	4-1	4-1
Tellicherry	5-1	5-1
Blaze Of Honour	8-1	7-1
Harvest View	7-1	8-1
Miss Diskin	10-1	10-1
Second Call	11-1	9-1
Coverdale Lane	12-1	14-1
Country Store	12-1	16-1
Dubelle	18-1	18-1
Koo's Promise	25-1	25-1

Each-way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3

Midlands National – Uttoxeter 1.50

Horse	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Tote
Lord Gyllene	7-4	7-4	2-1	9-4
Seven Towers	7-2	11-4	11-4	11-4
Act The Wag	9-2	6-1	5-1	6-1
McGregor The Third	9-2	5-1	6-1	5-1
Sister Stephanie	12-1	10-1	12-1	8-1
Killeshin	18-1	12-1	12-1	12-1
Musthaveaswig	14-1	18-1	14-1	16-1
Beaurepaire	20-1	25-1	16-1	20-1
Scribbler	25-1	25-1	22-1	16-1
Special Account	100-1	150-1	66-1	100-1

Each-way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3

Uttoxeter 2.25

Horse	Ladbrokes	Tote
Foxtrot Romeo	3-1	11-4
Ivy House	3-1	100-30
Mr Pickpocket	5-1	5-1
Kamikaze	6-1	7-1
Monymoss	7-1	7-1
The Shy Padre	9-1	10-1
Major Look	10-1	12-1
Judicious Captain	14-1	8-1
Pavlova	25-1	33-1
Ballydougan	50-1	33-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places 1, 2.

UTTOXETER

12.45: Harvest View won on this track five weeks ago but flopped when a hot favourite at Wincanton next time. Fathoming this mares' event is complicated by Tim Forster running both Second Call and Sail By The Stars. The latter looks best of the pair though she would be better suited by rain softening the going -conditions, which Tellicherry would also appreciate. But if the course rides fast, GOLDENSWIFT should take this. The mare was runner-up to well-handicapped Cariboo Gold, at Huntingdon last time.

❑❑❑

1.15: Grouseman is capable of winning this off top weight but is inconsistent. Thursday Night has plenty of ability too, but looks a difficult ride. Lord McMurrough improved to win decisively at Newbury last time and hails from a shrewd stable in good form – though Domappel is closely handicapped with this one. Perhaps this event can go to JACKSON FLINT, who has regained his old sparkle. This nine-year-old likes fast ground, looks well weighted and has the assistance of Richard Dunwoody.

❑❑❑

1.50: Lord Gyllene, an extravagant jumper, has run up a spectacular hat-trick of victories here in the last three months and will be backed to *make it four. This front-runner* may be vulnerable off a handicap mark 8lb higher than his latest win, however. The one to take advantage in this marathon could well be McGREGOR THE THIRD. Gordon Richards's 11-year-old runs off the same mark as when caught only on the line by General Wolfe at Haydock three weeks ago.

❑❑❑

2.25: MR PICKPOCKET is a *stronger horse this season after returning from injury* and appears a good bet after winning readily at Taunton last month. As a whole, though, this card looks hazardous *for punters attempting to recoup* Cheltenham losses.

❑❑❑

3.00: CONTI D'ESTRUVAL seems to be steadily regaining the form that saw him achieve four consecutive wins last season. Tony McCoy may *be able to get this one's head in front* for the first time this campaign.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

[UTTOXETER]

HYPERION

12.45 Goldenswift **3.00 Conti D'Estruval**
1.15 Jackson Flint **3.30 Bobby Grant**
1.50 McGregor The Third **4.05 Shekels**
2.25 MR PICKPOCKET (nap)

GOING: Good (Good to Firm patches on hurdles course in straight).
■ Left-hand course. Run-in of 170yd.
■ Course is south-east of town near B5017. Uttoxeter station (Derby-Crewe line) adjoins course. ADMISSION: Club £20 (OAPs £13); Tattersalls £12 (OAPs £7); Course £4. CAR PARK: Free.

SIS

LEADING TRAINERS WITH RUNNERS: K Bailey – 25 winners from 113 runners at a ratio of 22.1% giving a return to a £1 level stake of -£0.52; D Nicholson – 21 winners, 91 runners, 23.1%, -£7.56; N Twiston-Davies – 20 winners, 104 19.2 runners, -£6.09; *P J Hobbs – 15 winners, 82 runners, 18.3%, -£15.39.*
LEADING JOCKEYS: R Dunwoody – 39 winners, 163 rides, 23.9%, -£42.30; J Osborne – 28 winners, 93 rides, 30.1%, +£57.22; A Maguire – 24 winners, 116 rides, 20.7%, +£3.05; *N Williamson – 23 winners, 141 rides, 16.3%, -£17.78.*
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Conti D'Estruval (visored) (3.00), Garrylough (visored) (3.00). WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Fils De Cresson (4.05) sent 236 miles by James Adam from Westruther, Borders; Judicious Captain (2.25) sent 223 miles by Mrs Jane Storey from Kelso, Borders.

12.45 TATTERSALLS NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE FINAL (MARES) (CLASS C) £15,000 added 2m 5f

1 102313 BLAZE OF HONOUR (16) (Mrs A Leahy) A O'Brien (Ir) 8 12 0 ... C F Swan
2 2-14123 SECOND CALL (28) (J H Day) Capt T Forster 8 11 13 ... R Dunwoody
3 1P-1111 SAIL BY THE STARS (28) (D) (T F F Nixon) Capt T Forster 8 11 10 ... S Wynne
4 12-3215 MISS DISKIN (54) (D) (Martyn Forrester) R Buckler 8 11 3 ... B Powell
5 351F-13 HARVEST VIEW (28) (C) (BF) (Dr P P Brown) C Brooks 7 11 2 ... M Berry (7)
6 32U151 COVERDALE LANE (18) (C) (Jim Pilkington) Mrs S Smith 10 10 12 ... Richard Guest
7 30-2152 GOLDENSWIFT (37) (Mrs S Watts) G Balding 7 10 11 ... B Fenton
8 4-44U51 TELLICHERRY (16) (Mrs C Clatworthy) Miss H Knight 8 10 7 ... J Culloty
9 3P-332P COUNTRY STORE (8) (Westfield Racing) A Jones 8 10 6 ... D Bridgwater
10 6P-1303 DUBELLE (150) (W J Lee) J King 7 10 0 ... T J Murphy
11 135015 KOO'S PROMISE (21) (D) (G A Warren Limited) C Popham 6 10 0 ... R Farrant

– 11 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Dubelle 9st 12lb, Koo's Promise 9st 11lb.
BETTING: 100-30 Goldenswift, 4-1 Sail By The Stars, 5-1 Tellicherry, 7-1 Harvest View, 8-1 Blaze Of Honour, 11-1 Miss Diskin, Second Call, 12-1 Coverdale Lane, 16-1 Country Store, 25-1 others
1996: Garrylough 7 10 8 M Dwyer 9-4 (D R Gandolfo) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

GOLDENSWIFT has a lot going for her in that she comes here a fresh horse and this faster ground will suit her more than most. The trip also looks ideal. One thing noticeable about all her four starts over fences this season is that she has jumped really well and last time *out, her first outing in two months, she finished a good second to Cariboo Gold at Huntingdon.* The winner is unbeaten in two further runs and the form is decent. Irish challenger Blaze Of Honour, a better hurdler than Goldenswift, has taken well to chasing and won on *soft ground at Thurles last month before finishing third there on the heavy.* Her bumper and early hurdles win came on fast going, so she's unlikely to be inconvenienced by today's ground, but it may be that she has a few pounds too many with top weight. *Second Call comes only a pound less.* From recent runs it seems as if the handicapper may have caught up with her. Stablemate Sail By The Stars might be the bigger danger. She had been in good form over hurdles prior to making a winning start over fences at Windsor last month *and is favourably treated compared to her hurdles rating.* The only thing against her is that she has so far been at her best with cut in the ground. That is also undoubtedly the case with Miss Diskin and Coverdale Lane, while a slightly tenuous line through Jasilu just favours Tellicherry over Harvest View. **Selection: GOLDENSWIFT**

1.15 JOCKEYS ASSOCIATION FINAL H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £15,000 added 2m 4f 110yds £10,065

1 1/613-31 GROUSEMAN (28) (Aquarius) Miss H Knight 11 12 0 ... J Culloty B
2 323231 LORD MCMURROUGH (15) (J Nevile) J Nevile 7 11 11 ... R Farrant
3 06-1532 DOMAPPEL (49) (M C Banks) Mrs J Cecil 5 11 7 ... T Kent
4 1P1201 EDGEMOOR PRINCE (14) (D) (The Racing Hares) P Hobbs 6 11 6 ... G Tormey
5 1-4FF32 THURSDAY NIGHT (8) (D) (R Haggas) J FitzGerald 8 11 5 ... P Niven
6 R0-6231 JACKSON FLINT (16) (D) (Mrs L G Turner) T Thomson Jones 9 10 6 ... R Dunwoody
7 3P/15-24 TOPSAWYER (22) (Miss S E Hall) Miss S Hall 9 10 5 ... A P McCoy

– 7 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Domappel, 100-30 Edgemoor Prince, 11-2 Jackson Flint, 6-1 Lord McMurrough, Thursday Night, 8-1 Grouseman, 10-1 Topsawyer.
1996: Kadari 7 11 0 Guy Lewis 6-1 (W Clay) 13 ran

FORM GUIDE

For such a small field this is still a tricky event, though the novice EDGEMOOR PRINCE is the one most likely to have improvement in him. For such a grand stamp of a horse Edgemoor Prince seemed to have a lot on his plate over Warwick's sharp two and a half miles *last time, but he kept on in most determined fashion after leading five out to hold Lets Be Frank in a driving finish. A similar performance would put him bang in the picture again.* Having run out a wide-margin winner from Runaway Pete and Grouseman at Warwick (2m3f) in November, *Domappel seemed below his best when no more than a moderate third behind Reaganesque and Lord McMurrough there the following month.* A 6lb pull with subsequent winner Lord McMurrough gives Domappel every chance, especially after his latest *run against Dual Image at Doncaster. Dual Image's stablemate Thursday Night has run two good races since reverting to hurdling after a spell of novice chasing and a mistake at the final flight under a big weight probably meant the difference between winning and being beaten by Sassiver at Market Rasen eight days ago.* That looks a better performance than Jackson Flint's recent Ludlow win, and although Topsawyer finished fourth in a competitive race won by subsequent Cheltenham winner Big Strand at Haydock last time, the *trip (2m4f) seemed to find him out.* Grouseman beat Manus at Fontwell on his only start since his much-needed first run of the season behind Domappel at Warwick but has never won off a rating as high as today's. **Selection: EDGEMOOR PRINCE**

1.50 MARSTONS MIDLANDS GRAND NATIONAL H'CAP CHASE (CLASS A) £50,000 added 4m 2f £30,867

1 2-23111 LORD GYLLENE (NZ) (35) (CD) (Stanley W Clarke) S Brookshaw 9 11 10 ... A Dobbin
2 1F-5111 SEVEN TOWERS (28) (Mrs E A Murray) Mrs M Reveley 8 11 4 ... P Niven
3 F-5P534 KILLESHIN (14) (D) (H J Manners) H Manners 11 10 13 ... S Curran
4 R-11212 MCGREGOR THE THIRD (22) (C) (Mrs D A Whitaker) G Richards 11 10 9 ... R Dunwoody
5 F13-612 SISTER STEPHANIE (14) (BF) (The Antwick Partnership) G McCourt 8 10 8 ... D Bridgwater
6 3P1414 MUSTHAVEASWIG (14) (C) (BF) (P R D Fasteners Ltd) D Nicholson 11 10 5 ... R Johnson
7 2-33111 ACT THE WAG (8) (Robert Ogden) Martin Todhunter 8 10 3 ... A P McCoy
8 0554-06 SCRIBBLER (9) (Michael Farrell) G McCourt 11 10 0 ... C F Swan B
9 P-2P542 BEAUREPAIRE (14) (Pell-mell Partners) R Alner 9 10 0 ... A Thornton
10 1P-1044 SPECIAL ACCOUNT (28) (Tony Fodor) C Barwell 11 10 0 ... B Fenton

– 10 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Scribbler 9st 10lb, Beaurepaire 9st 5lb, Special Account 8st 6lb.
BETTING: 15-8 Lord Gyllene, 100-30 Seven Towers, 11-2 Act The Wag, 6-1 McGregor The Third, 9-1 Sister Stephanie, 12-1 Killeshin, *14-1 Musthaveaswig*, 20-1 Beaurepaire, 33-1 others
1996: Another Excuse 8 10 0 B Powell 14-1 (E M O'Sullivan) 17 ran

FORM GUIDE

The progressive LORD GYLLENE has been raised a stone and a half since beating Sailor Jim over three miles here before Christmas, but he has added two more wins over the course since then, the latest over this distance. While it's the handicapper that wins in the end, *Lord Gyllene at least has the build to carry top weight and his enthusiasm for the job could* enable him to squeeze another win before he is assessed right out of it. Lord Gyllene's progress this season has been matched by Seven Towers, who took his tally to three straight wins with a defeat of *Ivy House and Killeshin in Newcastle's 4m1f Elder Chase four weeks ago.* He was even more value than the official eight-length winning margin and it's most likely he'll confirm that form on 8lb worse terms. The only thing he might be faulted on is that he takes a while to warm up and Lord Gyllene's front-running style may leave him with a bit to do. Act The Wag is also chasing a four-timer. He is stepping up in grade and distance (his Catterick win over half a mile less is the furthest he has gone so far) but has impressed with the style of his wins and gets lumps of weight. *The distance shouldn't be a problem* for Sister Stephanie, a strong-finishing third in the big novice handicap at the Punchestown Festival last April. It's only the faster ground that detracts from her chance. McGregor The Third's neck defeat by General Wolfe over three miles at Doncaster recently, in his first run for three months, was a particularly good effort. Whether he has sufficient stamina is another matter, as his Cheltenham win over 3m7f was a cross-country chase run at a slower pace. *Musthaveaswig is a fast-ground performer and is 17lb better in compared to his* fourth behind Lord Gyllene here (3m2f) in January. **Selection: LORD GYLLENE**

2.25 BET WITH THE TOTE NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE FINAL (CLASS C) £20,000 added 3m 2f £14,070

1 1/040-14 KAMIKAZE (36) (BF) (Major B Gatensbury) K Bailey 7 11 10 ... C O'Dwyer B
2 263F41 MR PICKPOCKET (30) (John Holmes) Miss H Knight 9 11 6 ... J F Titley
3 4-21112 IVY HOUSE (28) (Mrs L R Joughin) J O'Neill 9 11 0 ... R McGrath (5)
4 324122 MONYMOSS (21) (S Powell) Mrs S Smith 8 10 13 ... Richard Guest
5 21/-34P4 MAJOR LOOK (NZ) (22) (C) (Mrs H J Clarke) S Brookshaw 9 10 11 ... A Dobbin
6 20-2P31 FOXTROT ROMEO (17) (Lady Cobham) C Brooks 7 10 8 ... G Bradley
7 5F5-2F0 THE SHY PADRE (51) (Mike Bateman) Mrs J Pitman 8 10 0 ... R Farrant
8 /5P-31F JUDICIOUS CAPTAIN (16) (BF) (James R Adam) Mrs J Storey 10 10 0 ... Mr C Storey
9 0-055U1 PAVLOVA (15) (Mrs Margaret McGlone) R Rowe 7 10 0 ... D O'Sullivan
10 6-PP003 BALLYDOUGAN (9) (Mrs Robin Mathew) R Mathew 9 10 0 ... D Walsh V

– 10 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: The Shy Padre 9st 13lb, Judicious Captain 9st 10lb, Pavlova 9st 3lb, Ballydougan 8st 10lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Mr Pickpocket, 3-1 Foxtrot Romeo, 4-1 Ivy House, 9-2 Kamikaze, 8-1 Monymoss, 12-1 Judicious Captain, 16-1 others
1996: Even Blue 8 10 5 D McCain 14-1 (Mrs C J Black) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

Kamikaze, a lightly-raced seven-year-old, was having his first run over fences when an 11-*length winner from Monymoss, with Major Look another 17 lengths back in fourth, at Market Rasen in January.* He's 17lb worse in with both but won so easily the winning margin could have been double. Kamikaze was fighting a losing battle after almost falling at the *first at Towcester last time. That run can be ignored but his lack of experience is bound to* be a handicap against the likes of IVY HOUSE, a one-time decent staying hurdler who is getting it together nicely over fences this season. Ivy House has more than made up for *blundering and unseating his rider in a slight lead at the final fence at Bangor in November* with comfortable wins at Sedgefield (3m3f) and Market Rasen (3m4f). As if that wasn't enough, Ivy House ran perhaps his best race so far when second to Seven Towers in the *Elder Chase at Newcastle four weeks ago. He didn't quite see out that marathon but his* stamina will be an asset here and he seems reasonably treated on the same mark as Newcastle with regular rider Richard McGrath taking 5lb off again. *Mr Pickpocket had shown plenty of promise before finally getting off the mark in a handicap at Taunton (3m) last month.* Although better when there is plenty of cut in the ground, this extended trip should be even more to Mr Pickpocket's liking and he is sure to be thereabouts. Foxtrot Romeo, another recent Taunton winner, has also shown a preference for softer ground. He races off the same mark as when running out an impressive winner of his qualifying heat at Taunton and, faster ground or not, is weighted to go close. **Selection: IVY HOUSE**

3.00 DHL WORLDWIDE EXPRESS HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS C) £6,500 added 2m 5f £4,509

1 3-2601F GARRYLOUGH (30) (CD) (BF) (T J Whitley) D Gandolfo 8 11 10 ... D Fortt (3) V
2 F5-6511 DISCO DES MOTTES (FR) (8) (Robert Ogden) G Richards 6 11 7 ... R Dunwoody
3 UP5343 CONTI D'ESTRUVAL (FR) (14) (D) (Bernard Keay) G Balding 7 11 4 ... A P McCoy V
4 1F4-P31 OVER THE POLE (21) (Pell-mell Partners) P Chamings 10 11 2 ... A Thornton
5 P0P-F5P FLORIDA SKY (102) (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 10 10 11 ... G Bradley
6 321221 KENMORE-SPEED (9) (K M Dacker) Mrs S Smith 10 10 6 ... Richard Guest
7 1-32224 FLAPJACK LAD (37) (CD) (BF) (T H Ounsley) N Twiston-Davies 8 10 1 ... D Walsh

– 7 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Disco Des Mottes, 7-2 Garrylough, 6-1 Conti D'Estruval, 7-1 Over The Pole, Kenmore-Speed, 12-1 Florida Sky, 14-1 Flapjack Lad
1996: Sailor Jim 9 10 0 C Maude 5-1 (P T Dalton) 9 ran

FORM GUIDE

DISCO DES MOTTES, a winner over hurdles and fences in France, had been running well enough with big weights over hurdles in this country before reverting to chasing with two easy wins. On neither occasion did he beat anything of significance, but he absolutely pulverised the opposition each time and going up a stone still leaves him some way below his hurdles rating. It's difficult to ignore him on those terms, even in this better grade. Garrylough won the Tattersalls Mares' Final here 12 months ago and came right back to her best with an easy win after Beatson had blundered his chance away when tried in blinkers at Kempton in January. She's in a visor this time after falling in front five at Sandown last time and has to come into the reckoning with the ground in her favour. Conti D'Estruval will also appreciate the faster ground and is coming to hand after running below form for much of the season. Last year he won four times in a four-week spell in March/April (the latest off a handicap mark of 115 compared to today's 112) and he was going on nicely at the finish when third behind Frickley and Destiny Calls at Doncaster a fortnight. The blinkers he wore in France are on for the first time in this country and he is one for the forecast before going on to a successful end-of-season spell. **Selection: DISCO DES MOTTES**

3.30 WEATHERBYS INSURANCE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £5,000 added 2m 6f 110yds Penalty Value £3,501

1 24-5005 MOVING OUT (14) (Mrs Shirley Brasher) Miss H Knight 9 11 10 ... R Dunwoody
2 3111 BOBBY GRANT (28) (John J Thompson) C Grant 6 11 1 ... P Niven
3 4-04253 ROYAL PIPER (NZ) (22) (C) (D) (A M Darlington) A J Wilson 10 11 0 ... R Greene
4 132114 SANTELLA BOY (USA) (168) (D) (The Link Leasing Partnership) C Mann 5 10 12 ... Railton B
5 14601/0- WINN'S PRIDE (497) (Mrs W L Bailey) R Hollinshead 6 10 8 ... S Wynne

– 5 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Bobby Grant, 5-2 Santella Boy, 3-1 Royal Piper, 6-1 Moving Out, 20-1 Winn's Pride
1996: Yes Man 7 10 9 J F Titley 6-1 (Miss H C Knight) 18 ran

4.05 PRUE FARMER 17TH BIRTHDAY 'NATIONAL HUNT' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m Penalty Value £2,390

1 113412 RANGITIKEI (NZ) (14) (D) (Mrs J M Mayo) C Mann 6 11 8 ... R Dunwoody
2 BARTY BOY (The Bartlett Family) J Mackie 5 11 1 ... T Eley
3 EAGER BEAVER (Mrs R A Humphries) Miss H Knight 5 11 1 ... J F Titley
4 005 EUROFAST PET (22) (Eurofast Petrochemical Supplies Ltd) S Brookshaw 7 11 1 ... A Dobbin
5 63/-F54P FILS DE CRESSON (32) (James R Adam) J Adam 7 11 1 ... J Railton
6 0-P LORD LOVE (26) (John Corbett) P Chamings 5 11 1 ... A Thornton
7 3430-55 MAITRE DE MUSIQUE (FR) (47) (Robert Ogden) Martin Todhunter 6 11 1 ... A P McCoy
8 00 RED OASSIS (25) (M K Penny) H Oliver 6 11 1 ... Jacqui Oliver
9 40-34 SHEKELS (51) (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 6 11 1 ... G Bradley
10 50 THE EENS (36) (Shaw Hill Golf Club (Sage Cott Props Ltd) D McCain 5 11 1 ... T Jenks
11 0 SUNSWORD (36) (Mrs Wendy Smith) M Barraclough 5 10 10 ... T J Murphy
12 0 SHARKEY (21) (Clayton Bigley Partnership Ltd) D McCain 4 10 7 ... D Walsh

– 12 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Rangitikei, 3-1 Shekels, 6-1 Maitre de Musique, 8-1 Eager Beaver, 10-1 Fils De Cresson, 12-1 Eurofast Pet, 16-1 others
1996: Flying Instructor 6 11 8 R Bellamy 4-1 (P R Webber) 16 ran

LINGFIELD

HYPERION

2.10 Hangover 2.40 Cheerful Aspect 3.10 Buckland Lad 3.45 Rachael's Owen 4.15 Normarange 4.45 Nordic Spree 5.15 Big Stan's Boy

GOING: Chase course – Good to Soft (Good in places); Hurdles – Good to Soft (Heavy in places in back straight).
■ Left-hand, undulating course. Stiff fences.
■ Course is SE of town on B2028. Lingfield station (served by London Victoria) adjoins course. ADMISSION: Members £15, Tattersalls £9. CAR PARK: Club £3; remainder free.

SIS RACING CHANNEL

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Ewar Bold (4.45).
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Ela Agapi Mou (2.40) won at Fontwell on Tuesday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Riseupwilliereilly (2.10) has been sent 183 miles by D Bassett from Oakford, Devon.

2.10 CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS SELLING H'CAP CHASE (CLASS G) £2,900 added 2m 4f 110yds

1 51P61F OPAL'S TENSPOT (11) J M Bradley 10 11 10 ... L Aspell
2 P4-3P53 HANGOVER (18) R Lee 11 11 6 ... P Henley
3 5-05066 MADAM ROSE (26) J Mullins 7 10 12 ... David Turner (7)
4 P-565 FATTASH (USA) (201) P Mooney 5 10 12 ... S Ryan B
5 FP064/ RISEUPWILLIEREILLY (1,214) D Bassett 11 10 12 ... W Greatrex (7)
6 FP0465 FULL SHILLING (17) D Williams 8 10 12 ... D J Kavanagh B

– 6 declared –

BETTING: evens Opal's Tenspot, 2-1 Hangover, 8-1 Riseupwilliereilly, 10-1 Full Shilling, 12-1 Madam Rose, 20-1 Fattash

2.40 GUILD VENTURE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,900 added 2m 3f 110yds

1 51-2131 SPLENDID THYNE (15) (C) T Casey 5 12 0 ... M A Fitzgerald
2 46P CHARLIE'S FOLLY (31) B De Haan 6 11 2 ... G Upton
3 02 CHEEKY CHARLIE (12) J Fitch-Heyes 5 11 2 ... P Henley (3)
4 F/2- COOL SPOT (488) G Enright 9 11 2 ... J R Kavanagh
5 32 EAU DE COLOGNE (31) Mrs L Richards 5 11 2 ... M Richards
6 0/0-PP SUPREME CRUSADER (8) W McKenzie-Coles 6 11 2 ... E Byrne
7 0 TORAJA (18) N Chance 5 11 2 ... D Leahy
8 12 CHEERFUL ASPECT (14) (CD) (BF) T Forster 4 10 13 ... N Williamson
9 251 ELA AGAPI MOU (USA) (4) G L Moore 4 10 13 ... P Holley
10 223 ALL DONE (14) S Mellor 4 10 2 ... N Mann

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Cheerful Aspect, 9-4 Splendid Thyne, 7-1 Cheeky Charlie, Ela Agapi Mou, 10-1 Eau De Cologne, 12-1 All Done, 20-1 others

3.10 NORTHERN TRUST SAPPHIRE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,375 added 2m

1 U36-124 RIVER LEVEN (50) (D) (BF) D Gandolfo 8 11 10 ... N Williamson B
2 22/-4654 RED BEAN (24) (D) K Vincent 9 11 5 ... M A Fitzgerald
3 4312-31 BUCKLAND LAD (24) (D) D Grissell 6 11 0 ... J R Kavanagh
4 0-41323 FICHU (88) (CD) (BF) Mrs L Richards 9 10 11 ... M Richards
5 F3-542P COPPER CABLE (53) C Smith 10 10 3 ... M Ranger

– 5 declared –

BETTING: evens Buckland Lad, 3-1 River Leven, 9-2 Red Bean, 5-1 Fichu, 12-1 Copper Cable

3.45 TJH GROUP GOLD CUP H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £6,300 added 2m 3f 110yds

1 544313 TICKERTY'S GIFT (31) (CD) (BF) G L Moore 7 11 13 ... M Batchelor (7)
2 31/F0F4 SPRING TO GLORY (22) (D) P Hayward 10 11 4 ... M A Fitzgerald
3 06-1312 SPRINTFAYRE (88) J Long 9 11 2 ... A Irvine (7)
4 345-22P RACHAEL'S OWEN (38) C Weedon 7 10 3 ... M Richards
5 2-6801P EQUITY'S DARLING (31) (CD) D O'Brien 5 10 0 ... P Hide B

– 5 declared –

BETTING: 11-8 Tickerty's Gift, 11-4 Sprintfayre, 9-2 Rachael's Owen, 7-1 Spring To Glory, 10-1 Equity's Darling

4.15 OPAL MAIDEN CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 2m 4f 110yds

1 32F33B AMBER SPARK (8) (BF) D Gandolfo 8 11 10 ... N Williamson
2 DEBONAIR DUDE N Henderson 7 11 10 ... M A Fitzgerald
3 3-32 NORMARANGE (15) (BF) D Grissell 7 11 10 ... P Henley (3)
4 00PP/US ONEOFUS (28) Mrs L Richards 8 11 10 ... M Richards
5 4P PLUMBRIDGE (15) P Chamings 9 11 10 ... J R Kavanagh
6 25000F- ROMALITO (315) M Blanshard 7 11 10 ... P Hide
7 0U-0UFP THE WAYWARD BISHOP (35) O Sherwood 8 11 10 ... J A McCarthy

– 7 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Normarange, 9-4 Amber Spark, 3-1 Debonair Dude, 12-1 Oneofus, Romalito, 16-1 Plumbridge, 33-1 The Wayward Bishop

4.45 HBLB BULL SYSTEMS NOVICE H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m 7f

1 22-4031 MILLMOUNT (24) T McGovern 7 12 0 ... M Batchelor (7) B
2 0600-51 RED LIGHTER (16) J Old 8 11 8 ... G Upton
3 4634 SHANAGORE WARRIOR (31) (BF) S Mellor 5 11 7 ... N Mann
4 60P/U0 STORMY SESSION (21) N Twiston-Davies 7 11 7 ... C Maude
5 45305 ROSS DANCER (9) J Moore 5 11 7 ... J Magee (3)
6 500-20P NORDIC SPREE (26) G L Moore 5 11 5 ... P Holley
7 20P331 ROSKEEN BRIDGE (15) C Weedon 6 10 12 ... M Richards
8 00-F000 THAT OLD FEELING (42) J White 5 10 1 ... D Gallagher B
9 15 SUPREME ILLUSION (8) John Berry 4 10 0 ... N Williamson
10 P-0FPU0 UPHAM RASCAL (46) D Gandolfo 6 10 0 ... D Leahy
11 U06555 EWAR BOLD (12) K C-Brown 4 10 0 ... J R Kavanagh B
12 034 WORKINGFORPEANUTS (1,015) C Smith 7 10 0 ... Mrs D Smith

– 12 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Supreme Illusion 9st 11lb, Upham Rascal 9st 10lb, Ewar Bold 9st 6lb, Workingforpeanuts 9st 6lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Red Lighter, 4-1 Millmount, 9-2 Roskeen Bridge, 8-1 Nordic Spree, 10-1 Stormy Session, 12-1 Ewar Bold, Shanagore Warrior, 14-1 others

5.15 INTERMEDIATE OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,500 added 2m 110yds

1 30 BIG STAN'S BOY (59) C Brooks 6 11 2 ... D Gallagher
2 0 EXPRESS AGAIN (7) M Haynes 5 11 2 ... N Williamson
3 0 MR ROBSTEE (86) A Chamberlain 6 11 2 ... O Burrows (5)
4 5 PEACE INITIATIVE (84) K Vincent 5 11 2 ... M A Fitzgerald
5 COUNTRY HOUSE J Old 6 10 11 ... G Upton
6 63 QUISTAQUAY (50) J Mullins 5 10 11 ... P Henley (3)
7 WHISKY WILMA R Curtis 5 10 11 ... D Morris
8 DUNSFOLD DOLLY P Winkworth 4 10 3 ... L Aspell (3)

– 8 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Country House, 3-1 Quistaquay, 5-1 Big Stan's Boy, 8-1 Whisky Wilma, 10-1 Express Again, 16-1 Peace Initiative, 20-1 others

NEWCASTLE

HYPERION

2.15 Advance East 2.50 Dual Image 3.20 Purevalue 3.55 Westwell Boy 4.25 Brighter Shade (nb) 4.55 Shanavogh

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places).
■ Left-hand, oval course; with rising run-in; tough, galloping track.
■ Course is on A1, 5m N of town. ADMISSION: Club £12 (OAPs and registered disabled £10); Tattersalls £9 (OAPs and disabled £7); Silver Ring £4 (OAPs and disabled £2). CAR PARK: Free.

SIS RACING CHANNEL

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Paparazzo (2.15).
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Nijway (4.25) won at Sedgefield on Tuesday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Khalikhoum (2.15) sent 170 miles by Sir John Barlow Bt from Malpas, Cheshire.

2.15 'WELCOME TO GOSFORTH PARK' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m

1 15 ADVANCE EAST (91) (D) M Dods 5 11 8 ... R Supple
2 6F0-14 BRUMON (7) (D) D Moffatt 6 11 8 ... Doubtful V
3 41 FAR AHEAD (21) (D) J L Eyre 5 11 8 ... B Storey
4 0R1-2F3 KILLBALLY BOY (18) (D) J H Johnson 7 11 8 ... M Moloney
5 123303 MITHRAIC (17) (D) W Cunningham 5 11 8 ... M Foster
6 105 QUANGO (28) J FitzGerald 5 11 8 ... F Leahy (3)
7 683 BANKER COUNT (16) M W Easterby 5 11 2 ... P Midgley (3)
8 0/060/ BATTERY FIRED (1,201) N Mason 8 11 2 ... S Haworth (7)
9 432-02 GOSPEL SONG (18) (BF) A Whillans 5 11 2 ... G Lee (3)
10 INYOUGOBLUE H Alexander 5 11 2 ... Mr T J Barry (7)
11 F0-00 PAPARAZZO (28) G Moore 6 11 2 ... J Callaghan B
12 00 PETRICO (17) P Beaumont 5 11 2 ... B Grattan (5)
13 00 PRAISE BE (FR) (10) T Tate 7 11 2 ... R Garritty
14 RAMBLING RAJAH Mrs S Bradburne 5 11 2 ... Mr M Bradburne (7)
15 0 SNIPER (18) F Murtagh 5 11 2 ... A Roche
16 0/0-P SOCCER BALL (217) T Watson 7 11 2 ... E Callaghan (3)
17 FP SOLWAY KING (19) M Barnes 7 11 2 ... S Taylor (5)
18 305 DELIGHTFOOL (12) R Nixon 6 10 11 ... G Cahill
19 F0 EVENING DUSK (19) J Oliver 5 10 11 ... S Melrose (7)
20 0/4 RAISE A DOLLAR (17) P Beaumont 7 10 11 ... Mr S Swiers
21 SHARLEY COP M Camacho 5 10 11 ... L Wyer
22 3P0 KHALIKHOUM (8) Sir John Barlow Bt 4 10 8 ... J Supple
23 305 ONYOURUWN (101) J H Johnson 4 10 8 ... D Parker

– 23 declared –

BETTING: 4-1 Far Ahead, 5-1 Gospel Song, 6-2 Mithraic, 7-1 Banker Count, 10-1 Quango, Advance East, 14-1 others

2.50 GRAINGER TOWN HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 2m 110yds

1 1F-3253 TIMBUCKTOO (38) J Oliver 10 12 0 ... B Storey
2 614132 DUAL IMAGE (18) (CD) J FitzGerald 10 11 1 ... R Garritty
3 0/-01441 CROSSHOT (17) (CD) R McDonald 10 10 5 ... R Supple
4 151-153 GROUSE-N-HEATHER (9) (D) P Monteith 8 10 3 ... G Cahill
5 160P53 BLAZING DAWN (11) (CD) J Hubbuck 10 10 0 ... G Lee (3)

– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Blazing Dawn 9st 13lb.
BETTING: 9-4 Dual Image, 5-2 Crosshot, 7-2 Blazing Dawn, 5-1 Timbucktoo, Grouse-N-Heather

3.20 TYNE BRIDGE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £4,850 added 3m

1 31-3416 PUREVALUE (22) M W Easterby 6 11 10 ... R Garritty
2 2F5111- LINLATHEN (292) Mrs M Reveley 7 11 8 ... G Lee (3)
3 302311 MEADOW HYMN (30) J FitzGerald 6 11 6 ... W Dwan
4 5-66055 COOL LUKE (18) F Murphy 8 10 13 ... Michael Brennan (3)
5 11120 KINDA GROOVY (899) I Park 8 10 12 ... N Smith
6 026-3F0 SUDDEN SPIN (80) J Norton 7 10 11 ... E Callaghan (3)
7 3R3-202 LEADING PROSPECT (8) Mrs J Goodfellow 10 10 10 ... N Horrocks (7)

– 7 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Linlathen, 5-2 Meadow Hymn, 9-2 Leading Prospect, 5-1 Purevalue, 8-1 Cool Luke, 20-1 Kinda Groovy, Sudden Spin

3.55 NEWCASTLE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS C) £6,300 added 3m

1 12F11/5 STRATH ROYAL (19) (CD) O Brennan 11 12 0 ... M Brennan
2 F0D-213 WHISPERING STEEL (14) (D) (BF) G Richards 11 11 11 ... B Storey
3 233212 ALJADEER (USA) (17) M W Easterby 8 10 12 ... R Garritty
4 604U22 CELIDH BOY (9) (CD) Mrs J Goodfellow 11 10 10 ... Mr R Hale
5 1-23F2F WESTWELL BOY (35) (D) P Beaumont 11 10 3 ... R Supple
6 3P-2020 DEEP DECISION (49) (C) P Cheesbrough 11 10 0 ... K Johnson

– 6 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Deep Decision 9st 12lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Aljadeer, 11-4 Whispering Steel, 4-1 Ceilidh Boy, 5-1 Westwell Boy, 7-1 Deep Decision, 12-1 Strath Royal

4.25 NORTHUMBERLAND NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 2m 4f

1 432315 BOLD ACCOUNT (10) (CD) (BF) G Moore 7 11 8 ... B Storey B
2 161 BRIGHTER SHADE (19) (CD) Mrs M Reveley 7 11 8 ... R Garritty
3 U4FU31 NIJWAY (4) M Barnes 7 11 8 ... S Taylor (5)
4 PU-F003 CORSTON JOKER (9) L Lungo 7 11 2 ... R Supple
5 003F54 FINE TUNE (15) Mrs S Bradburne 7 11 2 ... M Foster
6 0/2450 MALTA MAN (28) P Cheesbrough 7 11 2 ... G F Ryan (5)
7 P0-00F4 SHUT UP (8) Mrs E Moscrop 8 10 11 ... K Johnson

– 7 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Brighter Shade, 5-2 Nijway, 5-1 Bold Account, 7-1 Malta Man, 8-1 Fine Tune, 10-1 Corston Joker, 20-1 Shut Up

4.55 STUDENT CITY NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £4,850 added 2m 4f

1 0-12141 SHANAVOGH (21) (D) G Moore 6 11 10 ... J Callaghan
2 14 STAN'S YOUR MAN (102) (CD) Mrs J Goodfellow 7 11 4 ... N Bentley
3 330311 HERE COMES HERBIE (21) (D) W Storey 5 11 2 ... M Moloney
4 6/532-03 TWEEDSWOOD (92) P Beaumont 7 10 10 ... R Supple
5 2214-36 JUBRAN (USA) (7) (D) J Dodds 11 10 9 ... B Storey
6 FP-43 CHOPWELL DRAPES (12) J H Johnson 7 10 7 ... M Foster
7 36F1 MOCK TRIAL (60) (D) Mrs J Ramsden 4 10 7 ... R Garritty
8 020 LOSTRIS (47) M Dods 6 10 3 ... N Smith

– 8 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Mock Trial, 3-1 Here Comes Herbie, 7-2 Shanavogh, 5-1 Stan's Your Man, 6-1 Tweedswood, 8-1 Lostris, 14-1 others

RESULTS

FAKENHAM

2.10: 1. ANTIGUAN FLYER (Michael Brennan) 20-1; 2. General Shirley 8-1; 3. Arch Angel 7-1. 12 ran. 3-1 fav Ruth's Gamble. 11, 2. (G Prodromou, East Harling). Tote: £33.50; £7.70, £2.40, £1.80. DF: £187.50. CSF: £168.81. Tricast: £1,153.53. Trio: £240.40.

2.40: 1. WHAT CHANCE (Mr A Charles-Jones) 7-2; 2. Galzig 12-1; 3. Gypsy King 5-1. 10 ran. 11-10 fav Anse (5th). 3½, 2. (Mrs H Mobley, Brackley). Tote: £4.50; £1.40, £4.00, £1.70. DF: £24.50. CSF: £40.25. Trio: £39.30. NR: Broad Steane.

3.10: 1. PATS MINSTREL (A Dobbin) 9-1; 2. Artic Wings 9-4; 3. Whippers Delight 100-30. 5 ran. Evens fav Hawaiian Youth (4th). 2, 20. (R Champion, Newmarket). Tote: £8.60; £3.70, £1.50. DF: £12.00. CSF: £28.73.

3.40: 1. BARFORD SOVEREIGN (A Dobbin) 3-1; 2. Kintavi 6-4 fav; 3. Ajdar 8-1. 8 ran. Hd, 16. (J Fanshawe, Newmarket). Tote: £4.80; £1.70, £1.10, £1.70. DF: £4.80. CSF: £7.85. Tricast: £29.50. Trio: £5.70. NR: Irish Emerald.

4.10: 1. BROGEEN LADY (P Niven) 6-4 fav; 2. Jolly Boat 4-1; 3. Charter Lane 12-1. 8 ran. 2½, 18. (D Gandolfo, Wantage). Tote: £3.30; £1.80, £2.20, £2.50. DF: £8.50. CSF: £8.02.

4.40: 1. FLORID (M Berry) 3-1; 2. Taarish 9-2; 3. Formidable Partner 9-4 fav. 7 ran. 22, ½. (C Brooks, Lambourn). Tote: £3.80; £2.10, £1.60. DF: £8.60. CSF: £16.84. NR: O K Kealy.

5.10: 1. MUHANDAM (P Henley) 6-1; 2. Wentworth 2-1; 3. Air Commodore 5-4 fav. 8 ran. 6, 3. (Mrs D Haine, Newmarket). Tote: £7.60; £3.10, £1.00, £1.50. DF: £10.30. CSF: £18.36.

Placepot: £291.00. Quadpot: £18.10.
Place 6: £152.08. Place 5: £38.60.

FOLKESTONE

2.00: 1. FLASH IN THE PAN (W McFarland) 11-2; 2. Laura Lye 6-1; 3. Pedaltothemetal 9-4 fav. 11 ran. 8, 7. (J Moore, Andover). Tote: £7.20; £2.30, £1.70, £1.10. DF: £24.80. CSF: £34.06. Trio: £26.00.

2.30: 1. FLIPPANCE (C Llewellyn) 6-1; 2. High Learie 9-4; 3. Bond Jnr 100-30. 7 ran. 13-8 fav Sir Leonard (pulled up). 8, 16. (N Goselee, Upper Lambourn). Tote: £5.10; £2.20, £1.60. DF: £5.20. CSF: £18.10.

3.00: 1. SHARPICAL (M A Fitzgerald) 1-12 fav; 2. Fire On Ice 14-1; 3. Leap Frog 14-1. 8 ran. 3, nk. (N Henderson, Lambourn). Tote: £1.20; £1.00, £2.40, £2.70. DF: £2.80. CSF: £2.28. Trio: £4.40. NR: Smart Remark.

3.30: 1. THE CARROT MAN (P Hide) 7-4 fav; 2. Coolteen Hero 3-1; 3. Lasata 13-2. 4 ran. 24, dist. (P Winkworth, Dunsfold). Tote: £2.40. DF: £3.30. CSF: £6.48. NR: Pharsilk.

4.00: 1. CARACOL (T Lascombe) 6-1; 2. Multiflor 8-1; 3. Swinging Sixties 7-2. 12 ran. 3-1 fav Mirage Of Windsor (pulled up). 3, 3½. (J Neville, Newport). Tote: £8.70; £2.30, £2.60, £2.30. DF: £25.00. CSF: £58.18. Tricast: £189.64. Trio: £41.80.

4.30: 1. ROYAL SAXON (R Johnson) 5-1; 2. Shamarphil 13-2; 3. Yeoman Warrior 11-2. 10 ran. 5-2 fav Sugar Hill (pulled up). 2½, ½. (P Bowen, Haverford West). Tote: £8.00; £2.60, £1.90, £2.40. DF: £14.40. CSF: £33.73. Tricast: £167.32. Trio: £36.20. NR: Cruise Control.

5.00: 1. SUNDAY VENTURE (M A Fitzgerald) 15-8 fav; 2. Shebang 4-1; 3. Silver Sirocco 14-1. 16 ran. ¾, 3½. (N Henderson, Lambourn). Tote: £2.70; £1.20, £1.80, £6.80. DF: £5.40. CSF: £9.41. Trio: £65.00.

Jackpot: £11,083.50.
Placepot: £58.00. Quadpot: £11.70.
Place 6: £67.48. Place 5: £42.15.

SOUTHWELL

2.20: 1. MOONRAKING (G Parkin) 9-1; 2. Kilnamartyra Girl 7-1; 3. Dirab 7-1; 4. Hasta la Vista 8-1. 16 ran. 5-1 fav Widfire. 1, nk. (T Etherington). Tote: £17.90; £3.50, £2.40, £3.10, £2.80. DF: £90.00. CSF: £66.82. Tricast: £450.94. Trio: £334.20; £65.91 carried forward to Hereford 5.30 today. NR: Mr Speculator.

2.50: 1. SOLDIER COVE (D Sweeney) 3-1; 2. First Gold 20-1; 3. Live Project 9-4 fav. 10 ran. 2½, 2½. (Martyn Meade). Tote: £5.80; £2.10, £3.00, £1.30. DF: £37.50. CSF: £63.67. Trio: £15.10.

3.20: 1. BONYALUA MILL (R Havlin) 20-1; 2. Barwell Boy 8-1; 3. Impish 33-1. 9 ran. 4-5 fav Saratoga Red. 1½, 1¼. (A Streeter). Tote: £54.20; £9.10, £1.20, £7.80. DF: £98.70. CSF: £177.05. Trio: £170.80; £125.11 carried forward to Hereford 5.30 today.

3.50: 1. DOUBLE-O (K Fallon) 5-1; 2. The Wyandotte Inn 4-1; 3. V I P Charlie 4-5 fav. 4 ran. 6, 1½. (W Jarvis). Tote: £4.80. DF: £5.30. CSF: £20.58.

4.20: 1. MIRROR FOUR SPORT (K Sked) 10-1; 2. Aspecto Lad 11-4; 3. Mardrew 2-1 fav. 7 ran. 3, 4. (M Johnston). Tote: £11.90; £4.20, £1.90. DF: £23.60. CSF: £37.07.

4.50: 1. SQUARE DEAL (S Webster) 12-1; 2. Major Mouse 8-1; 3. Desert Invader 100-30. 9 ran. 3-1 fav Northern Fan (5th). 1¼, 1½. (S Bowring). Tote: £14.00; £4.00, £1.80, £1.50. DF: £34.10. CSF: £101.10. Trio: £129.10. NR: Roar On Tour.

5.20: 1. GENUINE JOHN (J Bramhill) 11-8 fav; 2. Evening In Paris 4-1; 3. Will Do 5-1. 6 ran. 1½, 1¼. (J Parkes). Tote: £2.20; £2.60, £4.00. DF: £4.60. CSF: £7.02.

Placepot: £4,767.10. Quadpot: £608.20; £263.01 carried forward.
Place 6: £3,527.27. Place 5: £1,236.85.

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sport

FIVE NATIONS FOCUS: Both are outside centres born in 1965, but when they face each other in Cardiff today, Will Carling will be ending his international career while Allan Bateman's is just beginning. **Chris Hewett** reports

Same age, different futures, grand stage

Carling: 'I'm not sure whether it's what I want any longer'

Photograph: Empics

Bateman: In line for Lions duty in South Africa

Photograph: Huw Evans

'It will be emotional but I don't suppose many Welshmen will break down in tears'

Two outside centres, born nine months and no more than 100 miles apart in 1965, are now, at long last, direct adversaries after plotting deeply contrasting routes along the highways and byways of international rugby. When Will Carling and Allan Bateman stare into the whites of each other's eyes across the Arms Park half-way line this afternoon, they will be only too aware of just how different they are.

For Carling, who feels instinctively that now is the time to bring down the curtain on a phenomenal decade in the public eye, today's Five Nations finale between Wales and England is a denouement in more senses than one; for Bateman, it is a new beginning, the delayed flowering of a union career interrupted by a not entirely fruitful sojourn in rugby league. For the barbered and Barboured Englishman, tired of the limelight's unforgiving glare, top-level sport has become a treadmill; for the low-slung and combative Welshman, it is a brave new world pregnant with possibilities.

Wild horses could not drag Carling anywhere near the plane that will take the Lions to South Africa in a couple of months' time – indeed, if England's former captain heads south of the equator this summer, it will be in search of the sort of sun-soaked peace and quiet seldom associated with the Springbok citadels of Newlands or King's Park. The opposite is true of Bateman, who is looking increasingly like the centre of Fran Cotton's dreams.

Compare comments from the two men this week and gauge the gulf in desire and enthusiasm. "I need time to think," Carling said. "There will be no definite decision on my international future until the summer, but it takes up more and more time and I'm not sure whether it's what I want any longer.

"I'm not saying my feeling for England rugby has greatly diminished but you change as a person as the years go by. Next October, the national team will effectively be cooped up in a hotel for a whole month in preparation for the pre-Christmas Tests. I don't want to close the door right now but..." and he shrugged his shoulders in a way that suggested he would rather eat uncooked offal from a dodgy abattoir than spend an entire autumn living on a diet of room service and squad training.

All of which is a foreign language to Bateman, every bit as reticent and withdrawn as his more illustrious peer but vibrantly alive to the challenges that lay before him. "A Lions trip would be the high point of my career and I'd love to get the chance now because the year 2000 seems an obvious time to call it a day. I've got another two years on my contract with Richmond and I'd like to extend it by another one, but there's no guarantee that I'll still be around when the Lions travel again.

"I'm hopeful, of course. Centre is a key position for the Lions because you can break a game from there and we'll need strength in depth. There are a lot of good players around in the position, real match-winners, so selection would be an achievement. I enjoy competition, though. South Africa would be a tough place to go for anyone who didn't."

Had Bateman – born in Maesteg and a Welsh Youth player in 1984 when Carling was making his early strides as captain of England Schools – not uprooted to play rugby league for Warrington in 1990 in a reported £100,000 deal, he too might have seen and experienced enough by now. As it turned out, the move north and then on to Australia with Cronulla Sharks left him with a reservoir of unfulfilled union ambition and when Richmond, well-heeled and ambitious, offered him big money to recross the divide, he did not keep them waiting for a reply.

"Looking back, the move to Warrington was pretty daft in many ways, certainly very short-sighted. The money looked good up front but the deal wasn't all it had been cracked up to be, and while I thoroughly enjoyed the rugby side of things, league didn't do much for me from a financial point of view until I went to Australia. That's when things started happening.

"It was there that it began to dawn on me that I was becoming a more complete player. There was an obvious development in terms of physique and at the same time, little things in my game began to improve: ball-handling, the ability to spot a gap, defensive organisation.

"When Wales toured Australia last summer I heard that they were looking to talk with me about coming back but there was no contact. I flew over from Sydney to play league in the European Championship and about three weeks later, Richmond got in touch. It moved very quickly from there; the Barbarians picked me for their game against Australia – fantastic thrill, that, especially for someone who went north after winning just four caps, none of them against a major southern hemisphere nation – and when poor Gareth Thomas crocked himself before the Test with South Africa before Christmas, bingo! I was back."

And how. According to Ben Clarke, the England and Lions loose forward who captains Bateman at Richmond, there is no more cultured centre in British rugby. "I'm constantly surprised, taken aback sometimes, by the intelligence of his contribution," he said during this week's build-up to the Arms Park. "He's a very quiet type, but when he does talk he makes an enormous amount of sense. Every time I train or play with him he offers some new refinement and if you ask me, there's an awful lot more to come. I honestly think he's capable of anything."

Even Carling waxes lyrical about the striking success of his contemporary's autumnal renaissance. "Very good player, Bateman," he says. "He seems to me to be a good basic footballer, an all-rounder who has balance, the ability to read a game and is capable of reacting to any given situation. In a sense, he is more crucial than any other individual to what is a very dangerous Welsh back division."

It may well be, then, that Carling's last hurrah in what remains the most emotion-clogged Five Nations fixture of them all will coincide with a definitive statement of future intent from a rival who, in different circumstances, he might have confronted a dozen times in the last 10 years.

"Emotion? Oh, it will be emotional," he agrees. "Mind you, I don't suppose for a moment that too many Welshmen will break down in tears because it's my last game." And a smile flickers at the edges of those famously dark eyes, as though the very thought of thousands of weeping Arms Park supporters is enough to make life in the goldfish bowl worth living after all.

Arms Park preservation lobby gathering support

Gareth Edwards touches down for Wales against Scotland at Cardiff Arms Park in 1976 Photograph: Colorsport

Time is up for the National Stadium as we know it. Or is it? **Chris Hewett** reports

According to a certain Italian poet of 14th century vintage, the deepest and most remote circles of hell contained all manner of giants, sorcerers and sowers of discord. Dante knew a thing or two, obviously. For generations of England rugby players, Cardiff Arms Park was the bottom circle of hell, inhabited by nightmarish phantoms who answered to names like Gareth, Phil and Barry.

It is safe to assume that few of the tears shed on the terraces of the National Stadium when it hosts its last big Five Nations occasion this afternoon will be English. Some of the greatest red rose captains of the post-war era would not only have voted to raze the damned place to the ground, but would have volunteered to drive the bulldozers as well.

If they turn up in central Cardiff in a couple of months' time and speak nicely to the demolition contractors, they might yet exact sweet revenge on Fortress Taff. In May, sacrilegious workmen are scheduled to flatten the existing structure, re-lay the holy turf at a different angle and construct a 73,000-seater stadium, complete with retractable roof, in good time for the 1999 World Cup. It should be a snip at £14m.

Jay Parrish, a director of the architects, Lobb Partnership, describes the Arms Park facilities as obsolete in comparison with the creature comforts to be found at Twickenham or Murrayfield and the Welsh Rugby Union, aware that a World Cup final would overstretch an old ground with a capacity of no more than 50,000, are in full agreement. The only way forward, say the Cardiff wheelers and dealers, is to build anew with help from the Millennium Commission.

Not surprisingly, the romantics of Welsh rugby – and they are legion – are horrified at the thought of losing the Valhalla where JJ and JPR ruled in the wide open spaces and the Viet Gwent – the Pontypool front row – squeezed opponents until they squeaked. Dai Watkins, Clive Rowlands, Brian Price and Cliff Morgan have all sounded off this week and now that the bandwagon is up and running, a late legal challenge to the entire venture cannot be ruled out.

Even high-profile supporters of the scheme are concerned that too little information has reached the public domain. Gareth Edwards, the scrum-half who bestrode the Arms Park throughout the 1970s, bemoans the "cloak and dagger" behaviour of the movers and shakers behind the project while giving his blessing to the wider principles behind the redevelopment.

"When I was embarking on my international career 30 years ago, no one wanted all the improvement work planned for the original Arms Park," he said this week. "Later, though, we all wondered how the hell we ever did without it. It's the same sort of thing now and I believe we should be positive and look ahead to something we can be proud of for the next 100 years, not just the next 10."

Cardiff City Council's chief executive, Byron Davies, has hit back with the view that Wales would have done equally well with a far more economic upgrading of the existing stadium. "It makes no sense at all refurbishing a facility that, in design terms, is 20 to 30 years out of date [illegible] would take us backwards rather than forwards" – but, whether he likes it or not, the counter-argument is gathering pace in the Principality. There is a breed of Welsh diehard that holds history more dear than any number of space-age overlapping seating tiers or mobile, weather-resistant roof systems.

The WRU yesterday dismissed as "pure speculation" reports that Wales will play their home matches at Wembley next season. [illegible] the whole issue may be an irrelevance come the end of this afternoon. If England win in Cardiff for only the third time in 34 years, the walls of the stadium may tumble on their own. Just like the walls of Jericho.

Scots bar Benazzi's path to Grand Slam history

SIMON TURNBULL

reports from Paris

Never before has a French Grand Slam coronation taken place on home soil. History beckons, and Parisian pomp and circumstance awaits the 14 Frenchmen who have the honour, and the burden, of carrying the Tricolore into the Parc des Princes' final Five Nations battle this afternoon.

It is one of the ironies which surround the unexpected denouement to this season's championship that the man who will lead the French XV on their historic mission once played against them. Not that Christian Carrère, the JPs Bastiat and Rives, or Daniel Dubroca – captains of the four French sides to have clinched Grand Slams on foreign shores – would begrudge Abdelatif Benazzi the unique place he stands to occupy in the Pantheon of Gallic, or in his case adopted Gallic, greats.

The French rugby fraternity was too busy making sure it was not counting its metaphorical cockerels yesterday to dwell on the fact that the skipper of *Les Bleus* happened to be born in Morocco and baptised at the international altar for the land of his Arabic fathers. Despite the flair which frazzled *les rosbifs* at Twickenham a fortnight ago, there was a marked French reluctance to assume that *les haggis* will be easy meat.

Jean-Claude Skrela captured the mood of caution, the Grand Slam back row boy of 1977 and coach to the class of '97 insisting: "We have won nothing yet. It would be an error to think we have a Grand Slam in our pocket. The Scots will come to the Parc with the same team spirit as we will have, and they come here with nothing to lose.

"Beating England was only a semi-final victory for us. We still have to play the final. We still have to win it." And winning is something France have not achieved in their last two Five Nations fixtures against Scotland.

The fact that just four members of the team beaten at Murrayfield last year will line up today is a fair measure of the depth of France's casualty list this season and the depth of the talent Skrela and his assistant, Pierre Villepreux, have unearthed.

Not only that. Villepreux, one of the finest free-spirit full-backs of his day, has sharpened a near novice backline close to cutting-edge perfection. "To be in this position... c'est formidable." he said yesterday. "We did not expect it."

It is just as well for Scotland that in Alan Tait they have a midfield defensive marshal in whom the sight of the razor-sharp Christophe Lamaison will strike no fear. "I've played against the Mal Meningas of this world," Tait observed, reflecting on his experience as a rugby league World Cup finalist. "They were frightening guys, but once you get on the field that fear goes."

The presence of sports psychologist Richard Cox among the entourage at Scotland's Versailles training session yesterday suggests the fear factor may be marginalised in the last championship match to be played in the cauldron of Parc des Princes; an autumn Test against the Springboks will be France's final engagement there before the move to the new Stade de France next year.

A Grand Slam would be a perfect parting gift. France's most recent dates back a decade, to the 1987 team against whom Tait made his debut in the drawn World Cup match in Christchurch that summer. "I'll never forget the try Serge Blanco scored from a tapped penalty," the Newcastle centre mused yesterday. "He was under the sticks before we even realised he had run the ball."

The veteran behind the Scottish pack would be ideally placed to compare the Gallic Grand Slammers of 1987 and 1997, though if Scotland manage to reproduce the dynamism which steamrollered the admittedly sorry Irish two weeks ago, the expected coronation party may yet be in for an almighty pooping.

The Scots have famously tripped France at the final hurdle before, claiming the grand prize for themselves courtesy of Jim Calder's try and the booming boot of Peter Dods at Murrayfield in 1984. Kilted souls seeking omens in Paris this morning may be further encouraged by discovering recollections of an even more painful last-ditch French disappointment within the pages of *Midi Olympique*, France's rugby weekly: when the team led by the remarkable flanker-cum-drop-kicker Jean Prat were thwarted by Wales at Stade Colombes in 1955.

Today Benazzi and his boys become only the second French XV to challenge for a "Grand Chelem" on the Calais side of the Channel. Crowning glory beckons in the park of the French princes.

FRANCE v SCOTLAND

at Parc des Princes, Paris

France	Club	No	Scotland	Club
J-L Sadourny	Colomiers	15	R Shepherd	Melrose
L Leflamand	Bourgoin	14	T Stanger	Hawick
C Lamaison	Brive	13	A Tait	Newcastle
S Glas	Bourgoin	12	G Townsend	Northampton
D Venditti	Brive	11	K Logan	Wasps
D Aucagne	Pau	10	C Chalmers	Melrose
G Accoceberry	Bègles-Bordeaux	9	B Redpath	Melrose
D Casadei	Brive	1	T Smith	Watsonians
M Dal Maso	Agen	2	G Ellis	Currie
F Tournaire	Narbonne	3	M Stewart	Northampton
O Merle	Montferrand	4	G Weir	Newcastle
H Miorin	Toulouse	5	A Reed	Wasps
A Benazzi	Agen, capt	6	R Wainwright	Watsonians, capt
F Pelous	Dax	8	P Walton	Newcastle
O Magne	Dax	7	I Smith	Moseley

Replacements: 16 U Mola (Dax), 17 P Bondoury (Narbonne), 18 P Carbonneau (Brive), 19 R Castel (Béziers), 20 J-L Jordana (Toulouse), 21 M de Rougemont (Toulon).

Replacements: 16 C Glasgow (Heriot's FP), 17 D Hodge (Watsonians), 18 G Armstrong (Newcastle), 19 D Cronin (Wasps), 20 P Wright (Melrose), 21 S Brotherstone (Melrose).

Referee: E Morrison (England). Kick-off: 2.0 (BBC 1 from 1.55; 2.45 BBC 2).

Students' win gives Welsh morale a lift

Welsh Universities yesterday gave their countrymen a boost before today's Five Nations finale with a 28-17 victory over their English counterparts.

Carl Morgan, Tristan Evans and Paul Jones scored tries for the Welsh in a match watched by the England coach, Jack Rowell, and the Welsh Rugby Union chairman, Vernon Pugh.

While Rowell was hoping to spot some promising players for the future, some of today's most powerful performers who have given England a hard time in the World Cup were in action in Sydney in the Super 12 tournament. Two late tries by the substitute flanker, Daniel Manu, helped New South Wales to their first victory in this year's competition as they beat Canterbury 25-8.

The home side struggled in the first half to break down New Zealanders' stubborn defence and led by only 9-8 at the break thanks to three Matt Burke penalties. The Wallaby full-back kicked two more penalties to make it 15-8 and when Manu came on as a 58th-minute replacement for the Test forward Michael Brial, the Australians began to take a grip. But they had to wait until five minutes from time to cross the Canterbury line.

A superb break from David Campese – recalled after NSW's 33-26 defeat by Waikato in their opening game – stretched the visitors' defence and a clever pass put Manu in for the touchdown. Manu's second try came in injury time. After a fierce forward drive from a penalty, the Tongan-born flanker barged over the Canterbury line.

■ England's captain, Pip Spivey, is returning to her birthplace to lead out her team in the Hong Kong Women's Rugby Sevens today. Spivey, 32, spent the first three years of her life there and was desperate to return before the island's return to China.

ENGLAND SQUAD (for Hong Kong Sevens, today): G Burns (Waterloo), H Clayton (Saracens), J Twigg (Waterloo), J Molyneux (Waterloo), P Spivey (Clifton, capt), J Edwards (Blackheath), A Wallace (Leeds), E Mitchell (Saracens), P George (Wasps), S Appleby (Leeds).

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Hughes walking a tightrope

Dave Hadfield talks to the former St Helens coach who now has the job of reviving Wigan in the second season of Super League starting this weekend

Looking at the world through Eric Hughes' eyes on the eve of the new Super League season, it could be difficult to decide whether he has the best job in the game or the worst.

Hughes is the man charged with holding together the stronghold that was Wigan; an edifice undermined by drama and tension off the pitch and dwindling resources on it.

"I know what people are thinking," he says. "Eric Hughes has come to the club just as it's about to collapse under him. I still see it as a great opportunity, and you don't turn down opportunities like this."

They say something else about Hughes. They say that he was the coach discarded by St Helens just as they approached take-off velocity and that his appointment at Central Park shows that the balance of power in the oldest rivalry in the game has shifted fundamentally. Wigan are now taking Saints' rejects.

"People are discarded all the time," he says. "It's the nature of the game, but you've got to have confidence in your own ability to do the job."

Although it was only after the appointment of the Australian, Shaun McRae, as his successor that Saints began to win trophies, Hughes is entitled to claim his share of the credit.

"I think I did a pretty good job at St Helens. I knew I had problems when I took over an ageing team with no money in the bank to change it without a lot of wheeling and dealing.

"When I left, they had a young team that was just about to take off. I'm proud of what I did at St Helens."

What he was originally brought in to do at Wigan was the job at which he has few equals: identifying and nurturing young talent.

Few would have doubted his ability to make a success of that. But, as he would admit, taking full responsibility a few months later for the whole shooting match is a different matter entirely. He had no hesitation in accepting the invitation to take over from Graeme West, but neither he nor anyone else expects it to be easy for him to put the sense of purpose back into Wigan.

> *'People are discarded all the time... You've got to have faith in your ability to do the job'*

The way in which he started the task was revealing. One by one, the players were called in for a face to face session with their new coach.

They were invited to talk about how they thought the playing side of the club should be run and how they saw their role in that scheme of things.

"Talking to them in a group can mean that the quieter ones don't get a say, so I learned a lot more this way," Hughes said. "They won't get it all their own way, but they will be listened to."

One conclusion he soon reached was that the players needed a more structured working week.

"We discussed what a fair working week would be and I've organised it so that they have a few afternoons off and at least one full day. Everyone needs that."

The trade-off for that is that when they are at work, they are at work. Wigan players are not quite clocking on and off, but there is a new emphasis on discipline and a more visible work ethic.

That is very much in tune with Eric Hughes' whole career. A lean, fit, skilful centre with a distinct mean streak – "I prefer the term committed," he says – he won the full range of honours with Widnes and played eight Tests for Great Britain. Unlike some equally talented players of his era, he was always a grafter and will expect no less of his new charges.

"It's not that he's brought in a lot that's new," says one of the most gifted, Henry Paul. "We are all experienced players and we know all the moves.

"What he has brought is a new emphasis on doing the basics properly. The other thing is defence. We were always known as a mean team defensively; we've lost a bit of that and we need to get back to it."

These are limited objectives, but the word from around Central Park is that Hughes has made a good start towards them. That is just as well, because the time he has available is limited as well.

As Hughes points out, Wigan can guarantee themselves another bad season very quickly. Losing two games was enough to deny them the Super League title first time, so a good start is essential.

They must make that start without Va'aiga Tuigamala, sold to Newcastle as part of the disintegration of the playing strength. Kelvin Skerrett, who will be on the bench for Wigan's first opponents, Halifax, and Shaun Edwards, who is likely to be the next to leave.

"We do need to rebuild in some areas," Hughes admits. He is in contact with specific players to strengthen positions with which he is not satisfied, but has had the novel problem this week of his chairman being in court and thus rather preoccupied with other matters.

There is, in theory, about £9m in Wigan's coffers from the sale of Central Park to Tesco, but will Hughes be allowed more autonomy in the transfer market than his predecessor?

If he is worried about these matters, Wigan's new coach is not showing it. He is positively philosophical about the prospect of Edwards' departure and still looks around him at training and sees an enviable array of talent.

"We are a lot better off than Saints were when I arrived there," he says. "I still see this as the best job in rugby league."

Eric Hughes, the new Wigan coach, believes that the glory days can soon return to Central Park

Photograph: Peter Jay

Harsh welcome awaits Skerrett

DAVE HADFIELD

If and when Kelvin Skerrett steps up from the substitutes' bench in the first match of Halifax's Super League season at Wigan tomorrow, he will be assured of a warm welcome from his former team-mates.

The former Great Britain prop, released by Wigan at the end of last season, has signed a one-year deal at Halifax and is in their squad for the game at Central Park.

There will be no sentiment attached to his return, however. "I've lost a lot of mates from this club," said Henry Paul, whose fellow-countryman, Va'aiga Tuigamala, has also departed. "But you always try harder against former team-mates.

"No one was worse than Kelvin at dishing it out to ex-Wigan players. So this time, Kelvin, you'll be getting some back."

Skerrett is kept on the bench at the start of the game by Karl Harrison and Wayne Jackson, but he is sure to figure later in the match.

Halifax's caretaker coaches, David Hobbs and Tony Anderson, have John Schuster back in action, but Wigan's Eric Hughes has a series of doubts.

Jason Robinson will be given until today to recover from an ankle injury. That remains unlikely and there must be a serious risk attached if Gary Connolly plays his first match since damaging his knee during his stint with Harlequins.

Shaun Edwards has not been considered because of his absence on father-to-be duties and Craig Murdock will be at scrum-half, with Hughes assuring him that there is still a place at the club for him even if he succeeds in signing Castleford's Tony Smith.

Salford, who play Castleford in their first Super League match following last year's promotion, will be without two of their experienced recent recruits, Andy Platt and David Hulme. Two young forwards, Paul Southern and Craig Randall, come into the side.

The champions, St Helens, whose on-off pursuit of Warrington's Iestyn Harris stepped up a notch yesterday, go to London Broncos without Derek McVey, who is hoping to recover from a cracked bone in his wrist in time for next Saturday's Challenge Cup semi-final against Salford.

Chris Morley deputises, while Lee Briers continues to stand in at scrum-half for the suspended Bobbie Goulding.

The Broncos have Martin Offiah back in harness, but have a worry over their Great Britain tourist, Tulsen Tollett, who has a shoulder injury.

Leeds will have their influential hooker, Wayne Collins, back against Oldham, who hope to be unchanged if their centre, Vince Fawcett, has recovered from mumps.

Work permit problems have delayed the arrival of the new Wigan signing Paul Koloi, the 24-year-old Tongan centre. Koloi, who starred for his country in the World Nines in Australia, is earmarked as a replacement for Tuigamala, now back in rugby union with Newcastle.

WEEKEND SUPER LEAGUE TEAM NEWS

Leeds v Oldham

Coach Dean Bell has delayed the selection of his new-look Leeds side but the former South Queensland hooker Wayne Collins will return after missing last Sunday's Challenge Cup win over Featherstone.

Oldham have a major doubt over the former Leeds threequarter Vince Fawcett, who is suspected of having mumps, and Afi Leuila, who broke a leg against Leeds last April, is on stand-by.

Big things are expected of the Rhinos after a disastrous first campaign in Super League and they should make amends for conceding a rare double to the Bears.

Last season: Leeds 16 Oldham 25; Oldham 28 Leeds 26.

Last five League matches: Leeds WLL-WL Oldham LWLLW.

Top scorers (1996): Tries Holroyd (Leeds) 13, Atcheson (Oldham) 11; **Goals** Holroyd (Leeds) 90, Maloney (Oldham) 45.

Match odds: H 5-6, D 16-1, A 5-6 (Oldham receive 16 points start on the coupon).

Referee: J Connolly (Wigan).

London v St Helens

The Broncos include Martin Offiah, who plays outside Greg Barwick on the left wing while full-back Tony Martin has recovered from a groin injury he picked up in the Challenge Cup defeat by Bradford.

Saints begin the defence of their title without scrum-half Bobbie Goulding, who is half-way through a six-match suspension, and injured forward Derek McVey as coach Shaun McRae sticks with the side that reached the last four of the Challenge Cup.

The Broncos, despite running the champions desperately close in both matches last season, are seeking a first against the Saints, who have won all previous 10 fixtures between the two clubs.

Last season: London 28 St Helens 32; St Helens 24 London 22.

Last five League matches: London LWWLW St Helens WWWWW.

Top scorers: Tries Barwick (London) 16, Newlove (St Helens) 38; **Goals** Barwick (London) 55, Goulding (St Helens) 162.

Match odds: H 5-6, D 14-1, A 5-6 (London receive 10 points start).

Referee: R Smith (Castleford).

Salford v Castleford

Salford, promoted as last season's First Division champions, must put any thoughts of next Saturday's Challenge Cup semi-final to one side as they step up into the big league but they do so without two of their veteran forwards, Andy Platt and David Hulme.

Castleford are without centre David Chapman, hooker Richard Russell and prop Sean McVean and include only seven players who were in the starting line-up in last month's 36-18 home Cup defeat by Salford.

Danny Orr, 18, is set for his first team debut at scrum-half in place of the transfer-listed Tony Smith.

Last season: No corresponding fixture.

Last five League matches: Salford WWWWL Castleford WLLWL.

Top scorers: Tries McAvoy (Salford) 20, J Flowers, C Smith, T Smith (Castleford) 10 each; **Goals** Blakeley (Salford) 106, Botica (Castleford) 84.

Match odds: H 5-6, D 16-1, A 5-6 (Castleford receive 14 points start).

Referee: S Cummings (Widnes).

Sheffield v Paris

After being caught cold in Paris' sensational launch of Super League a year ago, the Eagles have the chance to gain their revenge on home soil at the Don Valley Stadium. New coach Phil Larder has no injury worries but has yet to close the £60,000 deal that will bring the former Great Britain hooker Steve McCurrie from Widnes.

Paris, still looking for their first win on British soil, are without injured second rower Troy Bellamy but have prop Adam Peters free from suspension and included in an all-Australian line-up.

Last season: Sheffield 52 Paris 18; Paris 30 Sheffield 24.

Last five League matches: Sheffield WL-WLL Paris LLLLL.

Top scorers: Tries Senior (Sheffield) 17, Boman (Paris) 10; **Goals** Aston (Sheffield) 88, Torreilles (Paris) 27.

Match odds: H 5-6, D 14-1, A 5-6 (Paris receive six points start).

Referee: R Connolly (Wigan).

Wigan v Halifax

New Wigan coach Eric Hughes picks Craig Murdock at scrum-half for the unavailable Shaun Edwards but the Warriors are boosted by the return of Gary Connolly, who missed pre-season games with a knee injury sustained playing rugby union.

Caretaker Halifax coach David Hobbs is able to recall former Great Britain forward Michael Jackson, who has overcome a back injury, and veteran prop Kelvin Skerrett is on the bench against his old club.

The Blue Sox have to go back to October 1987 for their last win at Central Park.

Last season: Wigan 34 Halifax 26; Halifax 4 Wigan 50.

Last five League matches: Wigan WWWWW Halifax LWLWW.

Top scorers: Tries Robinson (Wigan) 26, Bentley (Halifax) 22; **Goals** Farrell (Wigan) 113, Schuster (Halifax) 113.

Match odds: H 5-6, D 16-1, A 5-6 (Halifax receive 20 points start).

Referee: S Presley (Castleford).

Handicap betting supplied by William Hill.

Eldredge facing up to quad dilemma

Ice skating

Todd Eldredge is facing a tough challenge as he prepares to defend his title at the World Figure Skating Championships, which begin tomorrow in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Eldredge, a four-times US champion, will try to keep his title without attempting to execute a quad, the four-revolution jump that nearly all his rivals have completed in competition.

Canada's Elvis Stojko and Russians Alexei Urmanov and Ilia Kulik landed quads earlier this month at the Champions' Series final, and are sure to try again, most likely in combination jumps.

Stojko landed the first clean quad-triple combination in competition and won in Canada. He plans to repeat the feat in Lausanne, adding a second triple axel to his long programme and a triple-triple combination to his short.

Eldredge has been practising the quad as a safeguard, but gives every indication he will not try it under the pressure of competition. After hurting his right ankle on a triple axel in practice last week, he is less likely to take chances that might cost him the title.

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AROUND THE RESORTS

Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Lwr cm	Upp cm	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Pas de la Casa	Wet lower down	100%	15.2	90	145	Partly cloudy
Soldeu	Spring snow	100%	15.2	30	150	Sunny spells
AUSTRIA						
Kirchdorf	Spring snow on Stangalpe.	45%	6.3	5	60	Snow shwrs
Kitzbühel	Soft, wet snow, bare patches	45%	6.3	0	55	Snow shwrs
BULGARIA						
Pamporovo	Packed snow, firm base	90%	10.3	30	60	Cloud/snow
CANADA						
Lake Louise	Excellent throughout	100%	7.2	126	170	Sunny spells
FRANCE						
Les Deux Alpes	Best skiing at altitude	95%	27.2	20	200	Partly cloudy
Tignes	Best skiing on glacier	95%	27.2	140	200	Cloudy
ITALY						
Cortina	Cristallo above 2,200m good	75%	26.2	5	65	Colder
Courmayeur	Lower runs patchy in places	95%	24.2	30	150	Less settled
ROMANIA						
Poiana Brasov	Dry, packed snow	80%	8.3	20	40	Snow shwrs
SPAIN						
Formigal	Wet snow	95%	15.2	15	115	Cloud
SWITZERLAND						
Verbier	Mont Fort still very good	90%	27.2	30	100	Clear/sunny
Villars	Village runs now closed	65%	27.2	10	80	Fine
UNITED STATES						
Loon	Mainly packed or groomed	90%	5.3	50	145	Pt cloudy
Mammoth	Powdery snow at all levels	100%	24.2	330	440	Clear

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Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

A sport set in turmoil over recent months by political in-fighting, faces a crucial trial at the annual meeting of the British Athletic Federation in Birmingham today.

A bid by the South of England Athletic Association to loosen the governing body's grip on television and sponsorship deals threatens to fragment the sport. If the SEAA wins the vote of club members in the meeting, and the decision is subsequently endorsed by the British Athletic Federation's Council, it could undermine athletics' case for receiving Lottery money.

A BAF application for annual funding of £5.5m within the recently established World Class Performance scheme is being considered by the Sports Council, which has made it known that it wants to be assured the sport is marching in step before turning over large amounts of public money.

Since the BAF's executive chairman, Professor Peter Radford, announced his resignation in January, the UK Sports Council has been consulting with BAF officers over restructuring the domestic sport's management.

"We feel very strongly that the BAF needs to take a good, hard look at its structure," a Sports Council spokesman said yesterday. "Any break-up in an uncoordinated, haphazard way which leaves different bodies doing different things, we don't think would be particularly helpful.

"That isn't an endorsement on the other hand, of what the BAF is currently doing. The fact that one element of the sport wants to break away shows the sport as a whole has got a major problem and needs to sort it out."

The SEAA, which has spent the week canvassing for support from the 600-plus clubs in its area, is recommending that individual associations should be able to conduct their own television and sponsorship arrangements for their own meetings.

The action has been prompted by two main factors. The first is the removal of the British grand prix meeting to Sheffield from its traditional venue of Crystal Palace, where it has regularly generated funds which the SEAA has passed to local clubs.

The second factor is the adverse reaction within the sport's traditional elements to the way Channel 4 is covering athletics within its new four-year contract.

If the proposal is carried, the South would be able to set up a one-day meeting to help fill a prospective shortfall of £70,000.

It may also lead to the Amateur Athletic Association of England withdrawing its 117-year-old event from BAF control – which wants to combine it with the World Championship trials – and staging it on different dates.

There has been speculation that in such circumstances, the AAA would turn to the disgraced former British promotions officer, Andy Norman, to help assemble athletes, although such an appointment would cause disquiet in athletic – and political – circles.

England Under-18s humble Wales

Hockey

BILL COLWILL

Peter Wiles, with two goals in the opening seven minutes, sent the England Under-18 team on their way to a crushing 11-1 win against Wales on the opening day of the Home Quad Youth tournament at the National Stadium, Milton Keynes, yesterday. There were also two goals each from Andrew Langlands, Andrew Todd and Paul Wicken.

It might have been different but for two brilliant saves by England's goalkeeper Pat Aldridge from Wales' James Bainbridge before England had opened their account. Bainbridge scored Wales consolation goal but by then England were into double figures. Earlier, Simon Lanyon scored twice for the Under 16s in their 6-0 win over Wales.

England's Seniors begin the Golden Jubilee Tournament in Karachi today against Pakistan with the news that their captain, Russell Garcia, their most experienced player, is sick and could be missing.

All Premier games were postponed because of the Pakistan tournament with the exception of Old Loughtonians' rearranged match against Surbiton, who will be looking to move out of the relegation zone with a win against the Old Boys.

The remainder of the weekend's National League matches centre on the Division One relegation battles. With Crostyx and Trojans likely to fill the two automatic relegation places, there is a desperate fight to avoid the next two play-off places.

Oxford University and Hull, currently filling those places, both have home fixtures. Oxford, who will need to lift themselves after their midweek Varsity match defeat, entertain Edgbaston, just three points above them while Hull meet Trojans.

Bromley and City of Portsmouth, currently one point above the University, have difficult away games at the champions, Beeston, and fourth-placed Isca.

Kellogg shows promise

Badminton

Donna Kellogg proved herself to be the brightest new prospect in the country when she reached a semi-final in her first All-England Championships at the age of 19.

The Derbyshire teenager and her partner, Chris Hunt, a Commonwealth Games gold medallist in mixed doubles, next face the Chinese pair of Liu Yong and Ge Fei, having already beaten two seeded pairs.

On Thursday they came from 8-12 down in the second game to win 15-8 17-16 against the fifth-seeded Russians, Nikolai Zuev and Marina Yakusheva, with Kellogg recovering from a shaky patch during the second game to score heavily at the net.

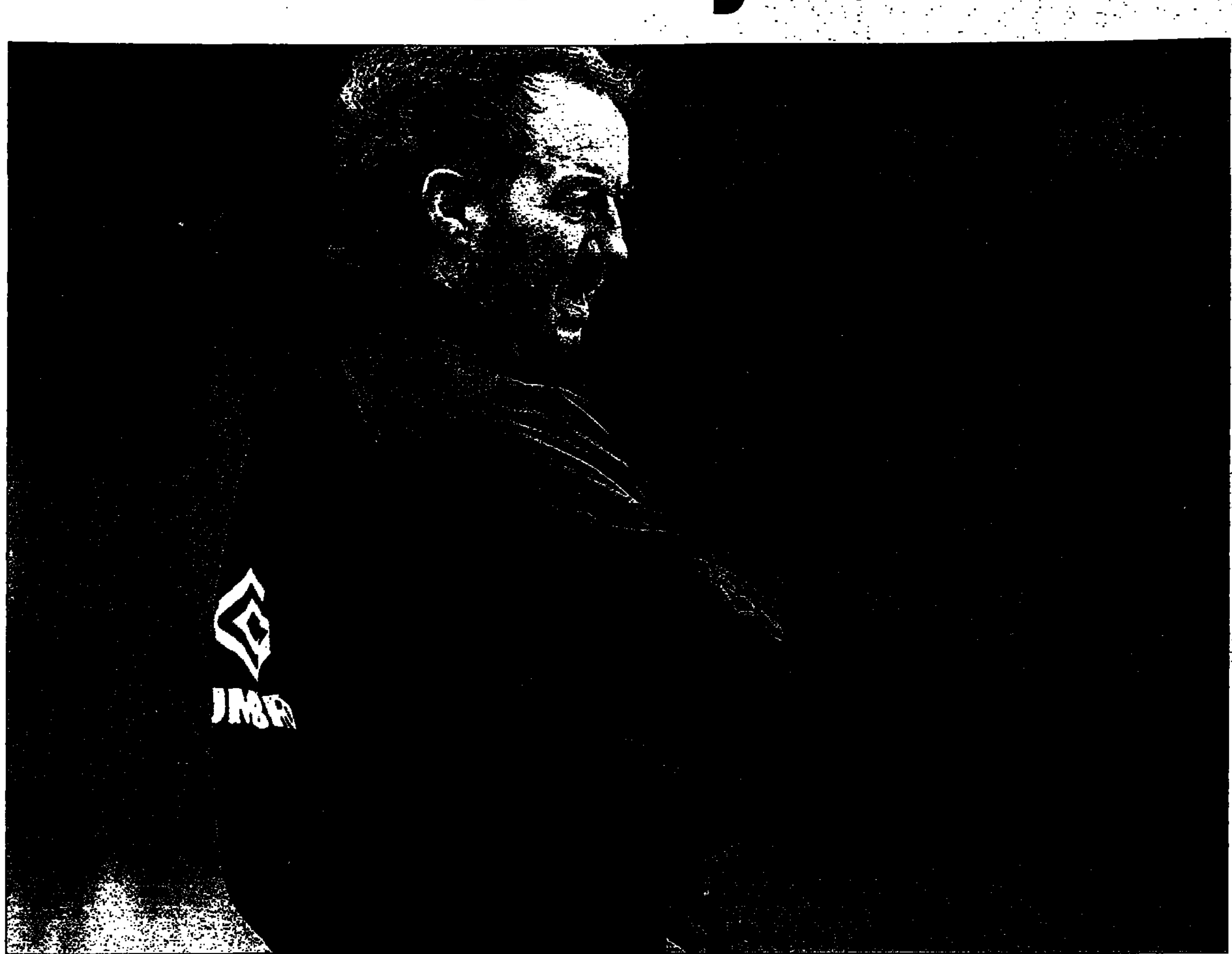
Denmark's Poul-Erik Hoyer, the top-seeded men's title holder and Olympic gold medallist who lives in Milton Keynes, is only two matches away from becoming the first player in a quarter of a century to win three All-England men's singles in a row. Hoyer's 15-7, 15-12 victory over Indonesia's Budi Santoso set up a re-match with China's Dong Jiong, a player he beat in the final in Atlanta.

The other semi-final is between China's former world junior champion, Sun Jun, and the world champion, Heryanto Arbi.

sport

Manchester City's fifth manager of the season has brought stability and the possibility of a play-off place. **Glenn Moore** talked to him about punctuality, his love of music and his disdain for 'Charlie Big Potatoes'

Clark tuned in to City's revival mood



Frank Clark, who supervised training at Platt Lane yesterday, is trying the novel approach of applying common sense at Manchester City Photograph: Peter Jay

If you frequent the Rhythmic Club, in Islington, you may remember him. Hangdog face, drooping moustache, sitting on his own in the corner. Yep, that was Frank Clark, manager of Manchester City.

Lest anyone get the wrong idea, Clark was not scouting for talent, he was watching a maestro: Bo Diddley. Some managers play golf or tend the garden, some drink. Attending concerts, on his tod, is Clark's release from the pressures of the job.

"I get to all the best places – the Rhythmic's very salubrious," he said with a touch of irony. "I love it, I go on my own and sit in a corner out of the way. The manager recognised me that night, so did the rock critic of the Evening Standard – he even mentioned me in his critique of the show. My wife was well pleased, she said 'you were there then', because she wasn't too sure."

Frank Clark is an untypical manager. He does not leap up and down on the touchline, he rarely curses referees and avoids media punditry. He does not appear comfortable

> 'I like star players, special players, but I don't like that star attitude and I don't see any of that from Kinkladze'

in any of the accepted uniforms, the track-suit, sheepskin or Armani. But while he may look and behave more like the laboratory technician he once was, he is one of the most respected managers in the game. The feeling in Manchester is that, more by accident than design, City have finally appointed someone who really could restore the glory days.

Clark, 53, took over in late December a few weeks after leaving Nottingham Forest, worn down by the takeover battle and poor results. In the 11 games before he arrived City had won twice; in the next nine League games they won five and drew four, raising expectations of a play-off place. Even Alex Ferguson, the United manager, put a bet on City.

Wednesday's defeat at Birmingham has quietened the mood but a victory today, at Grimsby, will spark the dreams again. "People change from game to game," Clark said. "If we win we're 'back on track', if we don't we're 'out of it'. It is not like that. Promotion was never more than a possibility, and it is still a possibility. I didn't for a minute think we'd win every game."

We are talking at City's Platt Lane training ground, just under a mile from Maine Road. At first sight this partnership between the local council and the club appears to be the community link every club should have. However, sharing the playing and social facilities with the public does have its problems. City, like Sunday morning park players, have to contend with stray balls flying across the pitch as they practice. They also have fans passing judgement on the touchline (as well, perhaps, as other clubs' spies).

"It is too accessible for a professional football club," Clark said. "It must have been very difficult for the players when they were having a bad time. At the moment, people want to come and say 'well done' but it is not always like that.

"You don't want to be in an ivory tower, separated from the supporters, but there has to be a line somewhere where the players can work in privacy. Even Newcastle closed their training ground when they had problems."

This accessibility is one reason why the manager's office door has a security-coded lock on it, rather than the revolving door City's turnover of managers would suggest. The office, noted Clark, "is austere" but that is partly because it is almost new – being just a couple of years old it has only had five or six occupants so far.

"The club needed stability," City's fifth manager of the season said. "Players had been underperforming. I looked at the teams and we were putting out sides with eight internationals. People at any organisation don't perform to their best when there is instability, they like security. I found that at Forest, not so much with players, but the staff. The longer the takeover went on, the more you could see the insecurity spreading."

In the circumstances Clark's first act at City, a code of conduct, was probably welcomed by his players as an sign of order replacing chaos.

"I'm not into sitting people down and giving them long lectures. It was a case of laying down a few rules and standards. They are not oppressive, just basics like turning up on time. It might seem a little thing, but I hate going into a dressing-room to start training and finding half of them are not ready. When I say we start at 10.30, I mean 10.30.

"The fines are only tenners. It means nothing financially but it is the principle. It is about discipline and laughter, you can have one without the other but you won't have a good football club if you do.

"One or two players have stepped out of line in small ways and been dealt with. They all get treated the same. Shortly after I arrived I read a piece by someone who had spoken to Georgi [Kinkladze]. He had said I was the 'hardest' manager he had ever played for and he thought it was right that he did not get any special treatment." Clark looks half-puzzled, half-pleased. "I don't think I'm particularly hard."

This brings us on to the Georgian playmaker, Kinkladze, who had been injured during City's good run. Is he staying?

"People have a fixation about him. The first question in the press conference is nearly always: 'When is he going to be fit?' In that respect it was nice that the players showed they can win without him. There was no sense in the dressing-room of 'let's show we can win without Georgi' but it won't do them any harm.

"I don't know him well yet but he seems very well balanced. There is no 'Charlie Big Potatoes' about him. I like star players, special players, but I don't like that star attitude and I don't see any of that from him.

"We will try desperately hard to keep him – there is no sense of cashing in on him. We would like to think we can build a team which will allow him to show his special talents for the benefit of the team. If he wants to leave, it is down to him. The club have made promises to him and we would keep them."

There is no "Charlie Big Potatoes" about Clark, either. Along with an ability to delegate, he cites a lack of ego as one of his strengths (and not in the way of someone saying his only fault is modesty). One of the memories of last season is watching Clark after Forest had beaten Lyons in the Uefa Cup in France. Throughout a pitchside interview, Forest fans had been calling his name. When it finished, he slowly walked towards them and, with great reluctance, raised an arm.

"It is important to acknowledge supporters but I find the populist thing difficult. I'm happy to take the responsibility but also want to share the praise. I had all my ego trips as a player. Egos get in the way, they cause more problems than anything in football."

A year ago this week Clark was preparing Forest for their Uefa Cup quarter-final home leg with Bayern Munich. Now he is preparing City to meet Grimsby Town. It

> 'I find the populist thing difficult. I had all my ego trips as a player. Egos get in the way. They cause problems'

has, he agreed with a wry smile, been an odd year.

When dealing with such contrasts, a lack of ego and sense of perspective are vital. Clark's long experience, as a non-League player with Crook Town, a European Cup winner with Forest, and a decade holding Orient together, are now invaluable.

So, too, is family life. He is living in a hotel but will move properly to Manchester when his younger daughter finishes her A levels in May. "Moving is an occupational hazard. I've been relatively lucky but I'll never forget the first few days taking my eldest daughter to a new primary school in London. I felt the biggest heel on two legs. She was crying non-stop – she was about eight – and it was the first time we had moved since she was a baby."

These days Clark's daughters are more likely to be asking him for concert tickets. Referring to Britain's biggest band, and City's most famous fans, Clark said: "I guess I'll have to watch Oasis now, my daughters are into them but they are a bit too modern for me. Anything after 1961 is a bit modern for me."

In music, maybe, but fortunately for City fans his teams play thoroughly modern football.

No 209 Southend United

FAN'S EYE VIEW

by S E Heath

Is there such a thing as "relegation kit"? Can something as increasingly ephemeral as these coloured viscose concoctions be so fundamental to a team's success or failure in the league? The effects of "invisible" grey kits on performance are well documented, as is the irrational dependence that most association footballers seem to have on superstition and the fates.

Watching Southend versus Ipswich Town recently I was perturbed that two players seemed reluctant to reappear after the interval, only arriving just as the referee raised the whistle to his lips. It transpired that one of the miscreants, Andy Rammell, had been wrestling with his contact lenses and the other, Phil Gridelet, refused to leave the dressing-room before him because it was his custom to always be the last on to the pitch.

In view of the team's results so far one can only speculate with dread just how bad things could have been had he not kept up this tradition. It has even been mooted in crueller circles that if he took his superstition to its logical conclusion and did not come out at all then the team would only benefit further. However, could the team strip also be playing its malign part?

I must admit to having been only mildly curious as to the design of the much-heralded "new kit" before its first official airing in a pre-season friendly against Tottenham Hotspur. Admittedly, I was fairly cynical about the whole affair in that this would be about the 10th new kit in as many years but I had been lulled into a false sense of security over the past few seasons.

The Southend team had of late been decked out in what was a largely understated and rather tasteful outfit as football strips go. I had begun to believe that a rational mind was at last in charge of kit selection. I was soon disabused. Both he, and his guide dog, were both obviously criminally insane.

When the team took the field that night there was an audible gasp from the crowd. It was not one of admiration. My initial opinion was that the tension of the evening had somehow got to "our boys" and they had all been sick down their fronts as they ran out on to the field. Sadly this was erroneous.

The offending garments are an indeterminate blue colour with an eruption of puce/yellow on the front. The only explanations I could come up was that the team had upset our beloved chairman and he was wreaking his revenge.

This bizarre "design" has even meant that Southend United could possibly have achieved a league first. On two occasions this season, against West Brom and Norwich, they have been obliged to play a home game in their red away kit. Foolishly the opposition had assumed that "The Blues" played in blue and so had arrived with a yellow strip. No one had thought to mention the sick stain.

Is it any wonder we can't sign anyone? If required to wear one of these shirts in public I would demand a police escort and a blanket over my head. The last time "The Shrimpers" looked this bad they slid into the Fourth Division. Relegation kit indeed!

Consequently the team stagger inexorably towards the abyss and we long suffering idiots begin to reacquaint ourselves with the routes to Shrewsbury, Walsall and Chesterfield. It might be apposite, however for the board to resolve that, if they give most of our players the bum's rush in June (as they ought) they allow them to take their kit with them. And serve them right!

MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES

TODAY

3.0 unless stated

FA Carling Premiership

1 Aston Villa v West Ham
2 Blackburn v Wimbledon
3 Everton v Derby
4 Leicester v Middlesbrough
5 Manchester Utd v Sheffield Wed
6 Newcastle v Coventry
7 Nottingham Forest v Liverpool
8 Southampton v Arsenal
9 Tottenham v Leeds

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	29	15	9	4	57	33	57
Liverpool	29	16	8	5	50	24	56
Arsenal	30	15	9	6	49	26	54
Newcastle	28	14	6	8	54	35	48
Sheffield Wed	29	12	12	5	39	33	48
Aston Villa	29	13	7	9	35	27	46
Wimbledon	27	12	8	7	39	32	44
Chelsea	28	11	10	7	44	41	43
Leeds	30	11	7	12	24	31	40
Leicester	28	10	7	11	33	38	37
Tottenham	28	10	5	13	34	38	35
Blackburn	28	7	12	9	29	27	33
Everton	29	8	9	12	36	43	33
Derby	29	7	11	11	31	44	32
Sunderland	30	8	8	14	28	41	32
Coventry	30	6	12	12	26	39	30
West Ham	28	7	7	14	27	39	28
Nottm Forest	30	6	10	14	25	46	28
Southampton	28	6	8	14	37	46	26
Middlesbrough	27	6	7	14	37	49	22

Nationwide Football League First Division

10 Crystal Palace v Norwich
11 Grimsby v Manchester City
12 Huddersfield v Portsmouth
13 Ipswich v Bolton
14 Oldham v Wolves
15 Port Vale v Charlton
16 Reading v Bradford City
17 Sheffield Utd v Oxford Utd
18 Southend v QPR
19 Swindon v Stoke
20 Tranmere v Barnsley

Second Division

– Blackpool v Preston
21 Brentford v Burnley
22 Bury v Gillingham
23 Chesterfield v Wycombe
24 Crewe v Luton
25 Millwall v Bournemouth
26 Peterborough v Stockport
27 Rotherham v Notts County
28 Shrewsbury v Plymouth
29 Watford v Walsall
30 Wrexham v York City

Third Division

31 Barnet v Swansea
32 Carlisle v Hereford
33 Darlington v Chester
34 Exeter v Scunthorpe
35 Hartlepool v Rochdale
36 Hull City v Brighton
37 Northampton v Lincoln
38 Scarborough v Torquay
39 Wigan v Cambridge

Bell's Scottish League Premier Division

40 Aberdeen v Dundee United
41 Hearts v Hibernian
42 Kilmarnock v Motherwell
43 Raith v Dunfermline

First Division

44 Airdrie v Falkirk
45 Clydebank v Partick
46 Dundee v St Johnstone
47 St Mirren v Morton
48 Stirling v East Fife

Second Division

49 Berwick v Livingston
– Brechin v Clyde
– Queen of the South v Hamilton
– Stenhousemuir v Dumbarton
– Stranraer v Ayr

Third Division

– Albion Rovers v Queen's Park
– Cowdenbeath v Arbroath
– East Stirling v Alloa
– Forfar v Montrose
– Inverness Cal T v Ross County

TOMORROW

FA Carling Premiership

Chelsea v Sunderland (4.0)

Nationwide Football League First Division

West Bromwich v Birmingham (2.10)

Second Division

Bristol Rovers v Bristol City (1.0)

Third Division

Leyton Orient v Fulham (12.0)

Bell's Scottish League Premier Division

Celtic v Rangers (3.0)

● Other weekend football fixtures: Page 26

TEAM SHEET

Aston Villa v West Ham
Last season: 1-1. Last five League matches: Aston Villa WWDWL, West Ham LLWLW.
Villa are likely to be without Staunton, who is still struggling with an ankle injury. West Ham have their £3.5m striker Hartson back from a two-match suspension, and Portugal's Porfirio could start in midfield in place of Bishop.

Blackburn v Wimbledon
Last season: 3-2. Last five League matches: Blackburn WDWDD, Wimbledon DWDLD.
Pearce and Donis are in contention to line up for Blackburn – Pearce has made only two starts in the last 16 months, while the Greek winger Donis has missed the last two matches through injury. Wimbledon have a full squad to pick from, apart from Holdsworth (doubtful with a rib injury).

Everton v Derby County
Last season: Did not play. Last five League matches: Everton WDLDL, Derby WDLWL.
Everton's Phelan, Parkinson and Thomsen face fitness tests. Youngsters Ball, Allen and Dunne are in the home squad. Derby's top scorer Sturridge is suspended, Van der Laan has a foot injury and captain Stimac a knee problem. Laursen and McGrath are both ready to return.

Leicester v Middlesbrough
Last season: Did not play. Last five League matches: Leicester LWWWD, Middlesbrough WDLLW.
Leicester's American goalkeeper Keller is on World Cup duty, so Poole returns to the team. Middlesbrough midfielder Stamp could return to the starting line-up if passed fit, because Mustoe starts a two-match ban and Emerson, like Stamp, has an ankle injury.

Man Utd v Sheff Wed
Last season: 2-2. Last five League matches: Manchester Utd WWDWL, Sheffield Wednesday DWWWW.
Giggs (hamstring) is fit again for United, and Pallister (groin strain) is also ready to return. Keane is completing a two-match suspension and Johnsen is doubtful with a back injury, but Scholes and Butt are both fit ahead of schedule. Wednesday have Blinker available after a two-match ban.

Newcastle v Coventry
Last season: 3-0. Last five League matches: Newcastle WWWLL, Coventry LDLDD.
Newcastle striker Ferdinand is still ruled out with the hamstring injury that he worsened in the 4-3 defeat at Liverpool on Monday. Coventry's Whelan is serving a one-match suspension so manager Strachan could switch Dublin back to the forward line from central defence.

Nottm Forest v Liverpool
Last season: 1-0. Last five League matches: Nottingham Forest DWLLD, Liverpool WWDLW.
Forest are likely to give a home debut to Van Hooijdonk while their latest signing, Moore from Tranmere, will start on the bench. City Ground old boy Collymore also looks likely to fill a substitutes' role as manager Evans sticks with the team that beat Newcastle on Monday.

Southampton v Arsenal
Last season: 0-0. Last five League matches: Southampton LDWDD, Arsenal DLLWW.
Saints are without defenders Van Gobbel (ban) and Dodd (ankle injury). Evans makes his home debut up front. With Seaman and now Lukic (poisoned toe) on the injured list, Arsenal choose the untried Harper ahead of Bartram, recalled from a loan spell at Wolves, in goal.

Tottenham v Leeds
Last season: 2-1. Last five League matches: Tottenham LDLLW, Leeds LWWWD.
Tottenham midfielders Howells and Nielsen are suspended. Leeds have fitness worries over Sharpe and Wallace. Sharpe's back injury has improved, though, and he has a good chance of recovering in time. Radebe is back from a two-match ban.

Tomorrow: **Chelsea v Sunderland**
Last season: Did not play. Last five League matches: Chelsea WDLDL, Sunderland LLLWL.
Di Matteo, rested in midweek, should return for Chelsea but Leboeuf is banned. Colgan looks set to continue in goal. For Sunderland, Stewart is ready for his first start in three months after a knee injury. New signing Hieselberg, a Danish Under-21 international, is in their squad.

Bradford must do without Waddle

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

Chris Waddle had hoped to spend today enjoying a return to the Premiership with Nottingham Forest, **writes Rupert Metcalf.** Instead, Bradford City's newly appointed captain lies on his sick bed, unable to help the Valley Parade club's battle against relegation from the First Division at Reading.

Bradford have stopped Forest signing Waddle, who wrongly thought his contract could be torn up if a Premier club came in for him, on a free transfer. The former England forward failed to turn up for City's journey to Berkshire yesterday.

"I spoke to Chris last night and this morning, and he said he's still being physically sick," Chris Kamara, the Yorkshire club's manager, said last night. "Bradford City is my main concern and I do have a good relationship with Chris and I would not want to jeopardise that. I have to take Chris's word."

The Second Division's most keenly contested fixture will be Bristol's 82nd League derby – which takes place amid bitter memories of the crowd trouble at the last meeting between City and Rovers, at Ashton Gate in December. Since then, City have banned 20 supporters for life and are waiting to do the same to others, after they have been before the courts. "It was a shameful day and I thought seriously of resigning," City's chairman, Scott Davidson, recalled.

That game ended 1-1, and the return finds City travelling tomorrow to the Memorial Ground, the stadium Rovers share with Bristol Rugby Club. City have been threatened by the Football Association with the loss of two League points if their fans cause any more trouble. They will have just 650 supporters, bussed in under police escort, in the all-ticket crowd.

Hateley back at Ibrox

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

Several recent meetings between Celtic and Rangers have been labelled the "derby of the decade", but for Glasgow fans it might not be too great an exaggeration tomorrow, when the men from Ibrox head for Parkhead in search of crucial Premier Division points.

Rangers, who are desperate to equal Celtic's cherished record of nine successive titles set under the late Jock Stein between 1966 and 1974, are five points ahead of their arch rivals. However, they have major injury problems, which has led to a return to Ibrox for the 35-year-old Mark Hateley.

Rangers have paid Queen's Park Rangers around £300,000 to re-sign the centre-forward they sold to the Loftus Road club for £1m 18 months ago. They need him because Gordon Durie has joined a sick and injured list which also includes Erik Bo Andersen, Peter van Vossen and Sebastian Rozental.

Tomorrow Hateley may join Ally McCoist, 34, in an experienced Rangers front-line. Andy Goram has both knee and rib injuries so Andy Dibble may make his debut in goal, while their captain Richard Gough may return after missing three games with a calf strain.

Celtic ended their nine-match, 22-month, winless run in the Old Firm fixture with an emphatic 2-0 Tennents Scottish Cup quarter-final victory 10 days ago. Paolo Di Canio is doubtful with a hamstring injury but Tom Boyd returns after suspension.

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It seems commercial demands, the root of the problem, will always outweigh concerns for the players' physical well-being

Pat Nevin

The old argument is set to resurface once again, that's if it had fully submerged in the first place. Should footballers forgo the needs of their country for the sake of their clubs, or vice versa? We often find ourselves in a no-win situation. Of course we feel honoured to represent our countries, but eventually and inevitably it will have an effect on club form. Every club manager I have played under swears blind that the domestic game following a big international frequently produces insipid, lacklustre performances from the returning national team players.

Physically there are good reasons why this should happen. You have played an extra game during the week, your opponent may not have, so he will be fresher than you. Travelling itself is tiring, and if you have come back overnight from a hard-fought Eastern European tie on the Wednesday, you will not get to bed until 5am or later on Thursday morning. It is almost impossible to get your body back in peak condition in time for Saturday's game.

Psychologically it isn't always easy either. Wednesday might have been the glamour of the *Azzurri* in Rome and Saturday you have to get yourself mentally attuned for a dour away trip against a team of scrapping relegation strugglers. It is also worth asking any top track and field athlete how often he can "peak" in any one season, it usually isn't more than half a dozen times. We are asking some of these lads to peak upwards of 60 times a season and often three times in one week. When representing your country everyone expects you to dig to the very depths of your resources, to go through pain barriers and drive yourself to exhaustion, Scotland will even use the film *Braveheart* before a game to help you squeeze out every extra bit of energy. The problem is that exactly the same is demanded three days later for your club.

Quite simply too much is being asked of some players and unfortunately it will continue get worse as the increasing number of domestic games each season become ever tighter and faster. It seems commercial demands, and these of course are the root of the problem, will always outweigh concerns for players' physical well-being. With the number of internationals being played continually rising too, something has to give. Sadly it is often the quality of play.

Continentals play fewer games than their British counterparts and at a less frantic pace. It is now the accepted wisdom in the game that our players go into vital international matches and important European club competition games more jaded than the opposition.

Managers are aware of this, so while Messrs Hoddle, Brown and co try to get a hold of players as often and for as long as possible, people like Alex Ferguson and Walter Smith are acutely aware of the draining effect the international week will have. This is the perfect recipe for friction and of course the player is caught in the middle.

I have a great deal of respect for Ferguson and the way he deals with the international dilemmas, which plague the domestic manager. He suffers from them more than most, but also manages to deal with them better than most. He has the experience, the wisdom and importantly, enough money to be able to cope with the inherent problems.

Player burn-out at the end of a season has cost many a championship and it is accentuated by international appearances. Ferguson well understands these physical demands, hence the size and quality of his squad and the frequency with which it is rotated. The idea is to be able to rest any player who is beginning to look jaded and also to give any injured player the opportunity to recover properly.

Most clubs have to play with two or three players carrying injuries at any one time. Apart from slowing them down, it affects the style and obviously the standard of their play. To have real aspirations towards winning the championship, the Manchester United manager knows that carrying players for any reason cannot be tolerated these days.

He has also been able to prioritise regarding which trophies he really wants to go for. Contrast the relaxed reaction of Ferguson when losing to Wimbledon in the FA Cup and Walter Smith's similar body language after losing in the Scottish Cup to Celtic with any other manager in the country going out at the same stage. They know that the championship and Europe are the real prizes these days for clubs with high aspirations, especially financial. Indeed Fergie's attitude towards the Coca-Cola Cup seems to border on contempt, more an opportunity to blood youngsters than a serious competition to be fought for at all costs.

Like other managers Ferguson is quick to protect his protégés, especially the most precocious such as Ryan Giggs. He has nurtured this talent too lovingly for too long to allow it to be ruined by short term overuse. He has steadfastly taken the position of flak-catcher when Ryan has been withdrawn (NB not Ryan has withdrawn) from Welsh squads. The Scotsman is doubtless happy to accept the criticism that he doesn't care enough for the Welsh national cause, because he knows how much more difficult it would be for the flying winger to live with such allegations.

Andy Roxburgh was so concerned about the problem of clubs withholding players, that he often urged the Scotland squad to have clauses written into their new contracts which ensured they were to be released for international games. If truth be told, though, the final decision always rests with the player these days, albeit allowing for a certain amount of coercion form the club.

Some players have such a strong national pride and feeling of duty and honour for their country, that the club is always considered second, without a moment's hesitation. Others are more pragmatic, all too aware who actually pays the wages at the end of the week. Most however simply acquiesce, and endeavour to give their all to everyone, every time, everywhere.

This happens even if it does lead to the odd tired, under par performance, which has the "experts" bemoaning the poor quality of our game, its players and their technique.

Olivia Blair is on maternity leave

Foxes bring Boro back to reality

Rupert Metcalf on the weekend programme in the Premiership

They may have reached one cup final and they may be 90 minutes away from another, but for Middlesbrough fans this season will surely be regarded as a shambles if they lose their place in the Premiership come May.

The Coca-Cola Cup finalists and FA Cup semi-finalists are an uncomfortable four points adrift at the bottom of the table, and a further two points behind the fourth-from-bottom side. The mathematics of salvation will seem much easier if the Teesside team can reclaim the three points they have been docked by the Football Association – but no one at the Riverside Stadium can afford to rely upon that particular shove towards the escape route.

Today Middlesbrough go to Leicester City, their adversaries at Wembley in the Coca-Cola Cup final on 6 April. The folk from Filbert Street, unlike their visitors, can just about afford to drop a few points between now and then, but with their places to play for none of the Leicester side should be in the mood for relaxation.

Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough player-manager, has had his share of difficulties with his foreign imports this season. One of them, Emerson, is doubtful with an ankle injury today but another, Fabrizio Ravanelli, seems happy at last.

On more than one occasion, the silver-haired striker's outbursts in the Italian media about his apparent desire to ply his trade anywhere but Teesside have caused a rumpus at the Riverside. Now, though, Ravanelli is singing a different tune.

In an interview in the Turin newspaper *La Stampa* which was topped by the headline "Ravanelli: I'll win two cups and stay", the former Juventus striker said: "I feel lighter now. I have a four-year contract with Middlesbrough, where I am really at home."

Ravanelli added that he was hopeful that his team would qualify for Europe by winning a domestic trophy. "I have really missed the European Wednesdays but I could rediscover them with Middlesbrough," he said. "This club has never won anything. If Ravanelli brings them a cup and also the title of top scorer, it will be as if I had won another European Cup."

Nottingham Forest, also in the relegation zone, are still trying to strengthen their squad. Having already bought Pierre van Hooijdonk from Celtic, they are returning to Parkhead to try and borrow Brian O'Neil, who can play in midfield or defence, for the rest of the season. The striker Ian Moore, who arrived this week from Tranmere for £1m, will be on the bench today when Liverpool come to the City Ground.

The Anfield side, in second place in the Premiership, are right back in the title race following Manchester United's unexpected defeat at Sunderland last weekend and their own stunning 4-3 win over Newcastle two days later. Liverpool have the luxury of no major injury worries today.

Manchester United, now just one point in front, entertain Sheffield Wednesday at Old Trafford. Alex Ferguson, the home manager, welcomes back two players who have made rapid returns from injury. Nicky Butt is in line for his first start of the year at the heart of United's midfield as Roy Keane is still suspended, while Paul Scholes is fit just over a month after a cartilage operation.

On Thursday, in a very relaxed interview granted to BBC Radio Five Live at the Cheltenham Festival, Ferguson insisted that his side have only one rival (Liverpool) for the title. That probably caused a few raised eyebrows at third-placed Arsenal, who are only three points behind United. The Gunners will surely be aiming for maximum points at The Dell today against a Southampton side much depleted by suspensions and injuries.

Fourth-placed Newcastle, nine points behind United with a game in hand, might also wish to argue with Ferguson's assertion. The Magpies, who entertain Coventry, are still struggling to field a forward line. Les Ferdinand broke down 11 minutes after coming on as a substitute at Liverpool on Wednesday, and his aggravated hamstring injury is likely to ensure he misses out today and on Tuesday, when Newcastle go to Monaco for the second leg of their Uefa Cup quarter-final.

"I had reservations about Les coming back as quick as he did," Kenny Dalglish, Newcastle's manager, said. "He thought he was fit and you can't fault players for wanting to play, but sometimes you've got to miss one match to catch the next four or five. The greatest healer is time and we will wait to see if he's ready [for Monaco]."

Brighton travel with renewed confidence

NICK HARRIS

As Brighton travel to Hull today, the away team's fans are confident that this season's biggest battle – for the survival of the club – is almost over.

An agreement was made on Thursday between Brighton's current owners and a consortium led by Dick Knight, a local businessman and lifelong supporter, which will guarantee the future of the club. Full details of the deal, which may include a move to a new stadium only 500 yards from the Goldstone Ground, will be announced as soon as legal matters have been finalised.

Last night, Coral, the owners of the Hove greyhound stadium, confirmed that an approach has been made by Knight's consortium, seeking at least a temporary home.

Brighton supporters have campaigned for years against the way the club has been run, and have staged protests ranging from pitch invasions to match boycotts. They were particularly unhappy with the chairman Bill Archer, after he sold the Goldstone Ground, but it is believed he will remain at club.

Liz Costa, spokeswoman for the official supporters' club, said: "We've won the war, but the treaty hasn't been signed yet and there are still a few bullets flying around.

"Dick Knight would not have got involved if he hadn't had the full backing of the supporters and now we've all got to back whatever he does." Fans are hoping for a change in fortunes on the pitch to match events off it, as they face this season's other battle, against relegation from the Nationwide League.

In December, Brighton were 11 points adrift at the bottom of the Third Division and effectively facing homelessness. Now only one point adrift, Liz Costa is confident about their prospects.

"Watch us fly," she said. "My God, are we going to do things. Everybody is behind the team and we know we've got a future."

Australia's Wayne Riley, the defending champion, on his way to a 66 in Aroeria yesterday Photograph: Allsport

Jonzon takes two-shot lead

Golf

While Seve Ballesteros missed his fourth consecutive cut, the Swede Michael Jonzon shot a seven-under-par 65 yesterday to lead by two strokes at 12 under on the second day of the Portuguese Open.

Jonzon, 24, who almost failed to retain his European Tour card last year, changed his putter this week and picked up seven birdies – including putts of 30 feet and 20 feet – on his way to a two-round total of 132.

The defending champion, Wayne Riley of Australia, had six birdies as he shot a 66 to stand two strokes back at 134. Also at 10 under was the first-round leader, Peter O'Malley of Australia, who had a 69.

Jose Maria Olazabal, continuing his remarkable comeback after an 18-month lay-off due to a foot ailment, returned a 67 to lie five shots off the lead on 137.

Ballesteros, Europe's Ryder Cup captain, shot a 72 for a half-way total of one-over-par 145. "Things didn't go the right way," said the Spaniard, who hooked off the tree-lined course three times. "I didn't manage to have a stable round and that's it."

The misery continued for Scotland's Sam Torrance, who improved on his opening 81 by 11 shots but still bowed out with a seven-over-par aggregate of 151.

Colin Montgomerie made a solid start in the Honda Classic at Coral Springs, Florida, shooting 68 Thursday to stand one shot off the pace in a group of five players. Lee Janzen and Paul Stankowski shared the lead.

Both Janzen and Stewart had a preview of the new TPC at Heron Bay course, designed by their fellow PGA Tour player, Mark McCumber. "I was excited about coming here and playing. I thought it would be a fair test, even if the wind blows," Janzen said.

The wind did blow during the first round, and scores were higher than expected on this flat course with no out of bounds and almost no water.

"There's more to this course than we first thought," Montgomerie said. "Suddenly the pins were tucked away and we were playing in tournament conditions. It was tough out there.

"I don't mind it blowing. In fact, what that does is take away the 63s and 62s, but it doesn't stop people from scoring 67s and 68s."

A headwind certainly stopped most people from picking up shots at the last. It produced an average score half a stroke above its par of four.

Worry for Woods

Tiger Woods will go looking for his first major in four weeks' time believing that the Augusta greens are dangerously close to being unfair.

Woods, who has won four events since turning professional last August, is now one of the favourites for the US Masters.

"I don't know whether the green speed is getting out of hand," he said yesterday. "The 11th was so fast last year (he played then as the US amateur champion) that people couldn't keep putts on the green, especially when the wind was blowing from right to left. That's borderline on getting unfair."

There is also concern for the state of the courses on the the European Tour which has had to apologise again for the condition of one of them. Players have been told there will be no fixed penalties imposed on anybody wishing to withdraw from next week's Turespaña Masters in Gran Canaria.

Seve Ballesteros and Jose Maria Olazabal are among the entrants at Maspalomas, where seven of the greens have been damaged by fertiliser scorching. This comes only seven months after the British Masters at Collingtree Park in Northampton became infamous for its diseased greens.

Sharks must be more ruthless

Basketball

RICHARD TAYLOR

"Tough it out." That's the message from the Sheffield Sharks coach, Jim Brandon, to his players as they try to snatch the Budweiser League title from Exide London Towers and hold off the challenge from the Leopards, Peugeot Birmingham Bullets and Chester Jets.

After his team beat Towers 100-93 on Thursday night, in the first of four matches involving the leading quintet in a week, Brandon said: "You can have all the class and finesse going, but they won't win you anything.

"I've tried to convince my players all season that to win you have to play tough until the end, and against Towers they showed the message is getting through."

By contrast, the Towers coach, Kevin Cadle, fears his players are losing the plot. "I knew I could count on my previous teams having the determination to win. But I can't count on that with this crew."

He reserved his most stinging criticism for the American Danny Lewis and his fellow guard Karl Brown, an England international. "The decision-making wasn't there against Sheffield and my guards are competing with each other," Cadle added.

Alan Cunningham limped out of Thursday's game with a knee injury but is fit to face Birmingham tomorrow, although Towers have lost the American Joe Hooks for the rest of the season with a groin injury. Sharks travel to Chester tomorrow and are at home again to London on Wednesday. The leaders, Leopards, visit Thames Valley Tigers tonight.

TODAY'S NUMBER

78,000

The number of pounds staked by an Essex woman on England to beat Wales in Cardiff today. An England victory will bring her £26,000 at odds of 1-3. The Ilford woman has already made £18,000 profit from her wagers on England's wins over Scotland and Ireland, but wisely resisted a punt on the defeat to France.

SPORTING DIGEST

Gloves are on for the girls

Boxing

Schools amateur boxing will soon be able to open its doors to female participation. Girls keen to wear gloves at the grass roots of the sport will be permitted to try their luck from October according to Chris Andrews, chairman of the National Schools' Boxing Association, which stages its jubilee championships at the Aston Villa Leisure Centre on 22 March.

"The recreational schemes we hold are very popular among girls and there is absolutely no reason why girls cannot participate as fully as boys," Andrews said.

"The ABA, a member of the international boxing community, has gone along with national requirement that girls should be allowed to box competitively with effect from next October.

"Whether or not that will happen remains to be seen. Firstly there must be a good deal of preparation to be done through the rules and regulations that apply. Secondly there must be a sufficient number of women who want to box.

"At the risk of being chauvinistic, there are a lot of people in boxing who have some reservations. But if women want to box and medically there is no reason why they shouldn't box, they should be allowed to do so."

Women in ring combat is a concept which is certainly gaining a professional profile in America. Britain has two women world champions: Jane Couch at welterweight and Cheryl Robertson at bantamweight.

Athletics

Michael Johnson, the first man to win gold medals in the 200 and 400 metres at the same Olympic Games, yesterday won the 1996 James E Sullivan Memorial Award.

Badminton

YONEX ALL-ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS (Birmingham) Women's quarter-finals: Gong Zhichao (Ch) bt S Susanti (Indon) 11-4 11-7; Ra Kyung-min (S Kor) bt C Martin (Den) 11-7 11-12 11-8.

Basketball

EUROLEAGUE Elimination round: Efes Pilsen (Tur) 84 Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 69.

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Leopards 95 Hemel & Watford Royals 85; Sheffield Sharks 100 London Towers 93.

Bowls

HOME INTERNATIONAL INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Ballymoney, Co Antrim): Scotland bt Ireland 124-118 (Sco skips first): J Muir lost to S Allen 18-29; G Robertson bt S Adamson 23-15; R Corsey bt J Baker 20-16; R McCulloch lost to D Corkill 11-23; A Marshall lost to R McCune 23-24; W Wood bt N Graham 29-11.

Boxing

Crawford Ashley, the Leeds light-heavyweight champion, has been ordered by the Boxing Board of Control to defend his British title against the leading contender, Mark Prince, of Tottenham, by 30 June, while the European Boxing Union is also demanding that Ashley defends his newly-won European title against Wales' Commonwealth champion, Nicky Piper.

Cricket

Paul Romaines, the Gloucestershire first-team coach, has resigned to become sports coach at Clifton College, Bristol.

Football

England's *Tournoi de France* match against Brazil has been switched to Paris because the stadium in Lens, being rebuilt for the 1998 Cup finals, will not be ready on time. England will now meet the reigning world champions at Parc des Princes on 10 June. Their other two games in the four-team tournament are against Italy in Nantes on 4 June and against France in Montpellier on 7 June.

Mark Kennedy of Liverpool and the Tottenham pair Steve Carr and Neale Fenn have been withdrawn from the Republic of Ireland's B team for the representative match with the National League of Ireland select at Tolka Park, Dublin, on Monday.

Tranmere Rovers have offered around £100,000 for Liverpool's former Wrexham striker Lee Jones, who is also wanted by Ipswich.

Shoreham, the Sussex County League club, have signed the former Republic of Ireland striker, John Byrne.

TRANSFERS: Devon White (forward) Watford to Notts County; Shaun Cunnington (midfielder) West Bromwich to Notts County (nominal fee).

LOAN TRANSFERS: David Hanson (forward) Leyton Orient to Chesterfield; Craig Midgley (forward) Bradford City to Scarborough; Paul Mahorn (forward) Tottenham to Brentford; Craig Armstrong (defender) Nottingham Forest to Watford.

THURSDAY'S LATE RESULTS: UniBond League Premier Division: Bishop Auckland 4 Lancaster 2. League Cup fourth-round replay: Guiseley 0 Colwyn Bay 2. Icis League Second Division: Wivenhoe 1 Collier Row & Romford 3. Jewson Eastern Counties League Premier Division: Halstead 0 Tiptree 2. Pontins League Premier Division: Birmingham City 1 Sheffield Wednesday 0 *(at Hednesford Town)*. Victory Shield Under-16 International: Northern Ireland 0 England 3 (at Windsor Park, Belfast). French League: Rennes 0 Monaco 3 (Legwinski 35, 47, Collins 67). Spanish Cup quarter-finals second leg: Rayo Vallecano 1 Real Betis 2 *(Betis win 4-1 on aggregate)*; Celta Vigo 1 Racing Santander 0 *(Celta win 3-1 on aggregate)*.

Golf

HONDA CLASSIC (Coral Springs, Fla) Leading first-round scores (US unless stated): 67 L Janzen, P Stankowski. 68 C Montgomerie (GB), B R Brown, G Kraft, P Stewart, S Appleby (Aus). 69 D Martin, M Bradley, B Lietzke, J Huston, P H Horgan, P Blackmar, G Boros, R Black, J Durant, R Alarcon (Mex). 70 T Simpson, T Byrum, B Langer (Ger), I Woosnam (GB), M McCumber, A Magee, C Beck, N Ozaki (Japan), R Gamez, D Mast. Selected: 75 S Lyle (GB).

KENYAN OPEN (Muthaiga) Leading second-round scores (GB or Irl unless stated): 133 S Burnell 67 66. 134 M Miller 67 67; M Scholz (SA) 68 66. 135 M Reale (It) 69 66. 136 P Harrison 65 71; H Bensdorp (Neth) 69 67; S Daniels (SA) 66 70; J Carriero (Arg) 66 70. 137 M Pullan 69 68; J Berendt (Arg) 70 68; S Cronin 69 69; M Stubbs 68 70; C Van der Velde (Neth) 67 71. 139 D Jones 70 69. 140 D R Jones 73 67; M McGuire 72 68; R Edwards 71 69; L James 69 71. 141 A Clapp 70 71; M Litton 69 72.

LPGA WELCH'S-CIRCLE K CHAMPIONSHIP (Tucson, Arizona) Leading first-round scores (US unless stated): 64 L Neumann (Swe). 65 J Piers. 66 T Green. 67 S Steinhauer, A Sorenstam (Swe), M Morris. 68 K Tschetter, D Pepper, J Inkster, D Eggeling, T Barrett, D Andrews, C Nilsmark (Swe), A Dibos. GB selected: 70 L Davies, A Nicholas.

Hockey

MEN'S WORLD CUP QUALIFIER (Kuala Lumpur): 11/12th place: Ireland 1 Belarus 2. 9/10th: South Africa 3 Switzerland 2. 7/8th: Belgium 1 Argentina 2. 5/6th: Canada 3 Malaysia 1.

HOME QUAD YOUTH TOURNAMENT (Milton Keynes): Under 18: Scotland 2 Ireland 2; England 6 Wales 0. Under 18: England 11 Wales 1; Ireland 3 Scotland 1.

Ice hockey

NHL: Montreal 3 Boston 0; Florida 5 Vancouver 4; New Jersey 6 Hartford 0; Philadelphia 5 Edmonton 4 (ot); NY Islanders 3 Tampa Bay 0; St Louis 4 Los Angeles 2.

Rugby League

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE: S George 14 Manly-Warringah 18.

AUSTRALIAN SUPER LEAGUE: Adelaide Rams 10 Hunter Mariners 8.

Rugby Union

Northampton will play their rearranged Courage League National League One match at Harlequins on Wednesday 30 April. The match, originally scheduled for next Saturday, has been postponed as Saints have several players on World Cup Sevens duty in Hong Kong.

SUPER 12 SERIES (Sydney): New South Wales 25 Canterbury (NZ) 8.

Skiing

ALPINE WORLD CUP FINALS (Vail, Colorado): MEN: Super-G: 1 A Schifferer (Aut) 1 min 33.76 sec; 2 J Strobl (Aut) 1:33.80; 3 K Ghedina (It) 1:33.88; 4 L Cattaneo (It) 1:34.29; 5 K A Aamodt (Nor) 1:34.36. Final Super-G standings: 1 L Alphand (Fr) 351pts, 2 J Strobl 333; 3 Schifferer 256; 4 H Maier (Aut) 230; 5 Ghedina 218. Overall standings: 1 Alphand 1,130pts; 2 Aamodt 1,024; 3 Ghedina 990; 4 J Strobl 981; 5 H Knauss (Aut) 727. WOMEN: Super-G: 1 K Seizinger (Ger) 1 min 15.73 sec; 2 H Gerg (Ger) 1:16.53; 3 M Ertl (Ger) 1:17.01; 4 I H Marken (Nor) 1:17.07; 5 F Masnada (Fr) 1:17.28. Final Super-G standings: 1 Gerg 490pts; 2 Seizinger 474; 3 P Wiberg (Swe) 419; 4 I Kostner (It) 355; 5 Ertl 248. Final downhill standings: 1 R Gotschl (Aut) 483pts; 2 H Zurbriggen (Swit) 466; 3 W Zelenskaja (Rus) 423; 4 Wiberg 412; 5 Seizinger 405. Overall standings: 1 Wiberg 1,815; 2 Seizinger 1,284; 3 Gerg 1,100; 4 D Compagnoni (It) 827; 5 Kostner 783. Women's Nation Cup: 1 Germany 4,057; 2 Austria 3,219; 3 Italy 3,004; 4 Switzerland 2,379; 5 Sweden 2,367.

Snooker

THAILAND OPEN (Bangkok): Quarter-finals: N Bond (Eng) bt Q Hann (Aus) 5-0

Squash

RENAULT AUSTRIAN OPEN (Linz) Men's quarter-finals: Jansher Khan (Pak) bt P Gregory (GB) 15-12 15-14 5-15 8-15 15-6; J Bonetat (Fr) bt G Ryding (Can) 11-15 15-11 15-6 15-13; D Jenson (Aus) bt Zarak Jahan Jahan (Pak) 15-14 15-8 15-9; R Eyles (Aus) bt C Rowland (Aus) wo. Women's quarter-finals: N Tippett (Aus) bt J Hackey (Aus) 9-1 9-2 9-2; S Bond (Eng) bt N Grainger (SA) 1-9 9-6 4-9 9-3 9-7; K Major (Aus) bt A Hopps (Aus) 9-3 9-2 9-4; E Major (Aus) bt M Jons (Can) 1-9 9-7 10-8 9-4.

Sumo

SPRING GRAND TOURNAMENT (Osaka, Japan) Sixth day (of 15): Oginishiki (won 4, lost 2) bt Tokitsunada (4-2); Daishoho (3-3) bt Minatofuji (4-2); Rikio (3-3) bt Gojoro (2-4); Dejima (5-1) bt Aogiyama (4-2); Konishiki (1-3-2*) bt Misugisato (1-5); Tochinowaka (4-2) bt Hamanoshima (3-3); Higonoumi (4-2) bt Yamato (2-4); Asahiyutaka (3-3) bt Kaikachidoki (3-3); Kotoinazuma (4-2) bt Shikishima (2-4); Ganyu (3-3) bt Minatoumi (3-3); Asanowaka (2-4) bt Daishi (2-4); Kyo (5-1) bt Tamakasuga (3-3); Terao (1-5) bt Kotonowaka (1-5); Tosanoumi (3-3) bt Tochiazuma (1-5); Musoyama (3-3) bt Kenko (1-5); Takatoriki (5-1) bt Kyokushuzan (1-5); Kotonishiki (3-3) bt Musashimaru (5-1); Takanonami (6-0) bt Kaiyo (1-5); Takanohana (5-1) bt Asanosho (1-5); Akebono (6-0) bt Akinoshima (3-3).

* denotes absence

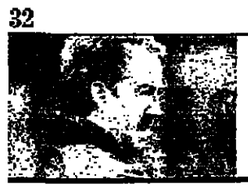
Tennis

The United States, the reigning Fed Cup champions, will have to beat Japan in a play-off this summer to remain in the top flight of the women's team event. A depleted US team lost to the Netherlands in the opening round early this month and following yesterday's draw in Luxembourg they will be relegated to Group II unless they beat Japan in the play-off round from 12 to 13 July. The United States have home advantage.

COPENHAGEN MEN'S OPEN Singles, second round: L Burgsmuller (Ger) bt K Ullyett (SA) 3-6 6-3 6-4; M Damm (Cz Rep) bt N Marques (Por) 6-3 3-6 6-3; G Raoux (Fr) bt D Prinosil (Ger) 7-6 6-4; T Carbonell (Sp) bt K Carlsen (Den) 7-6 7-6; F Fetterlein (Den) bt F Dewulf (Bel) 6-3 7-6.

MEN'S CHAMPIONS CUP (Indian Wells, Calif) Second round: B Ulihrach (Cz Rep) bt P Sampras (US) 7-6 7-5; J Stark (US) bt G Ivanisevic (Croa) 7-5 6-3; C Woodruff (US) bt T Enqvist (Swe) 6-4 6-4; M Rosset (Swit) bt H Dreekmann (Ger) 3-6 6-3 7-6; A Berasategui (Sp) bt N Kulti (Swe) 6-3 6-7 6-3; C Pioline (Fr) bt S Stolle (Aus) 6-4 6-4; B Black (Zim) bt A O'Brien (US) 3-6 6-1 7-6; F Clavet (Sp) bt J Sanchez (Sp) 6-4 4-6 7-6.

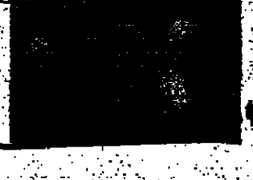
WOMEN'S EVERT CUP (Indian Wells, Calif): Singles, semi-final: I Spirlea (Rom) bt A Sanchez Vicario (Sp) 4-6 6-3 6-3.



On the City beat
Frank Clark talks football and music with Glenn Moore, page 30

sport

Walking a tightrope
Eric Hughes tells Dave Hadfield about his new life at Wigan, page 29



FIVE NATIONS FINALE: Wales and England search for respectability at the Arms Park's last international before demolition

Final hymn at Cardiff cathedral

CHRIS HEWETT
reports from Cardiff

The way things are going, this summer's Lions team can forget about flying business class to South Africa and negotiate a block booking on an air ambulance instead. So many obvious tour candidates are to be found among the walking wounded of the Five Nations that Fran Cotton's plan to send 35 fit players to take on the might of the Springboks looks optimistic in the extreme.

Yesterday, Lawrence Dallaglio emerged as the latest exhibit in a week-long gallery of aches, pains and cry-offs. England's blind-side flanker, not only a stone-cold certainty for a Lions place but a dark horse for the captaincy, went down with flu-type symptoms here yesterday and was given only a 50-50 chance of facing the Welsh at the Arms Park this afternoon. Chris Sheasby, his Wasps teammate, was called in as cover but if Dallaglio fails a check-up this morning, Ben Clarke will play.

Today's championship finale has been so badly devalued by enforced absences – one very influential third of what might have been an extremely dangerous Welsh side will not even be at the starting post and three other players are carrying injuries – that an England victory, rare enough on the far side of the Severn, would carry rather less kudos than usual. Indeed, defeat would leave Jack Rowell with the worst Five Nations record of his stewardship and more egg on his face than a clown at Billy Smart's Circus.

Five Nations table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	3	3	0	0	87	57	6
England	3	2	0	1	107	42	4
Wales	3	1	0	2	81	72	2
Scotland	3	1	0	2	70	85	2
Ireland	4	1	0	3	57	141	2

Results: 19 January: Ireland 15 France 32; Scotland 19 Wales 34.
1 February: England 41 Scotland 13; Wales 25 Ireland 26.
15 February: Ireland 6 England 46; France 27 Wales 22.
1 March: England 20 France 23; Scotland 38 Ireland 10.
Today: France v Scotland; Wales v England.

Which is how a cynic might describe the sight of Dave Alred, widely acknowledged to be the world's leading kicking specialist, putting Mike Catt, Rob Andrew and Tim Stimpson through their paces at Sophia Gardens yesterday. Alred has not been involved with the England squad for months; he has a contract with Newcastle, where Andrew, his favourite student, is director of rugby, but spends the rest of his time working with Super 12 sides in Australia or giving one-off tutorials to whoever seeks his expertise.

Andrew's bizarre recall to international duty this week as a direct result of Paul Grayson's hip injury, which left Rowell fretting about England's exposed position on the kicking front, paved the way for Alred's sudden reappearance. "Don't ask me what's going on with the Rugby Football Union," he said. "I just do as I'm asked and on this occasion, it was Rob who asked me down."

For whatever obscure reason – a reason that appears to embarrass Rowell, who this week directed all inquiries on the subject to Don Rutherford, the RFU's technical director – England appear either unable or unwilling to resolve the Alred issue. As an exercise in self-flagellation, it takes the proverbial biscuit. Andrew swears by the man and that should be recommendation enough.

Rutherford revealed that England were hoping to finance a full-time kicking coach from next season, adding: "What Dave needs to do is tell us whether or not he wants to be a full-timer with the national squad. It is my view that I wouldn't like to see an England coach helping players from other countries improve their skills."

In turn, Alred pointed out that as he had been ignored by England he had been forced to make a living for himself elsewhere.

It is perfectly possible that England's chances of victory will depend on how much shine Alred managed to apply to Catt's cobweb-infested kicking technique in the space of 24 hours. The Bath outside-half proved himself a more than adequate marksman during the three-match programme of pre-Christmas internationals – certainly, goalkicking was the last thing that got him dropped – but the emotional weight of today's contest would test the nerve of an automaton, never mind a man who aims for goal only when he pulls on an England shirt.

The Welsh may look worryingly toothless without such obvious match-winners as Ieuan Evans, Scott Gibbs and Arwel Thomas, but England are fielding an untried half-back pairing of Catt and Austin Healey and more pertinently, the visitors' defeat by France a fortnight ago may well have damaged the fragile psychology of the side more than Rowell was prepared to admit during the build-up to this one.

While both Rowell and Phil de Glanville, his captain, have gone to inordinate lengths to extol the dynamic virtues of England's opening hour against the French, both men privately accept that an unacceptable degree of naïvete was also evident at Twickenham that day.

"We played so fast in the first 60 minutes that an occasional breather might have been useful," said Rowell, a firm indication that the forwards may have more of a say in determining tactics this afternoon.

If Jason Leonard's tight five are given a free hand to do things their way against a Welsh pack that does not quite measure up – they will miss every ounce of Colin Charvis' muscular presence on the open-side flank – England should strong-arm their way to a Triple Crown. "We would still have under-achieved because we set out in pursuit of a Grand Slam, but the important thing is to come out with something," De Glanville said.

But more than half the England side have yet to experience the oppressive atmosphere of Cardiff on international day and they will be fearful of the occasion; especially this occasion, the last international at the Arms Park before the demolition crews move in. With Jonathan Davies grinning impishly at outside-half, Neil Jenkins ready to kick goals from everywhere and 50,000 Welshmen endeavouring to invoke the spirit of past glories, it will be hard not to be washed away by a spring tide of sentiment.

"We've heard a good deal about England's wider, more expansive style but I'm not convinced that they are wholly comfortable with it, or even that they are completely convinced by it as a way forward," Kevin Bowring, the Welsh coach, said.

"We feel we deserve better from this championship than to finish with one win from four matches and while it's been a difficult week on the selection front, we're confident of finishing with a win, just as we did last year against France."

If it comes to pass, one last piece of folklore will have been written in the annals of a wonderful rugby cathedral.

England's elder statesmen, Rob Andrew and Will Carling, renew their partnership in an unusual way yesterday Photograph: David Ashdown

WALES v ENGLAND
at Cardiff Arms Park

N Jenkins	Pontypridd	15	T Stimpson	Newcastle
S Hill	Cardiff	14	J Sleightholme	Bath
A Bateman	Richmond	13	W Carling	Harlequins
N Davies	Llanelli	12	P de Glanville	Bath, capt
G Thomas	Bridgend	11	T Underwood	Newcastle
J Davies	Cardiff	10	M Catt	Bath
R Howley	Cardiff	9	A Healey	Leicester
C Loader	Swansea	1	G Rowntree	Leicester
J Humpreys	Cardiff, capt	2	M Regan	Bristol
D Young	Cardiff	3	J Leonard	Harlequins
G Llewellyn	Harlequins	4	M Johnson	Leicester
M Voyle	Llanelli	5	S Shaw	Bristol
S Williams	Neath	6	L Dallaglio	Wasps
S Quinnell	Richmond	8	T Rodber	Northampton
K Jones	Ebbw Vale	7	R Hill	Saracens

Replacements: 16 W Proctor (Llanelli), 17 P John (Pontypridd) 18 D McIntosh (Pontypridd), 19 C Quinnell (Richmond), 20 S John (Llanelli, 21 B Jenkins (Swansea).

Replacements: 16 J Gisbert (Bath), 17 R Andrew (Newcastle), 18 A Gomersall (Wasps), 19 B Clarke (Richmond), 20 D Garforth (Leicester), 21 P Greening (Gloucester).

Referee: J Dume (France). **Kick-off:** 3.0 (BBC1).

In Monday's 20-page sports section

'We've been through the full range of ups and downs. We started out with all due optimism, watched the pre-Christmas internationals and thought 'Bloody hell, this doesn't look too good' and then cheered up during the course of the Five Nations, which has been excellent.'
Fran Cotton, manager of the Lions, speaks to Chris Hewett in the Monday Interview

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QPR move for Ripley could set up Sinclair sale

Football

ALAN NIXON

Stuart Ripley, the Blackburn Rovers winger, is lined up for a £1m move to Queen's Park Rangers this week – paving the way for the sale of Trevor Sinclair.

Ripley has been stuck in Rovers' reserves after a comeback from injury, and the QPR assistant manager, Bruce Rioch, watched him play in a midweek second-team game.

Ripley has also been chased by West Bromwich Albion, but they are more interested in a loan deal. Rangers can cash in on Sinclair by selling him to Leeds for £6m – with an imminent deal possible if they can sort out a replacement.

The Manchester United manager, Alex Ferguson, has rubbished press reports emanating from Italy that he has launched a £5m bid for Milan's Croatian midfielder, Zvonimir Boban. "We have not approached Milan and we have had no contact with the player either," Ferguson said.

The Aston Villa forward Tommy Johnson is still pondering a move back to Derby County, who have agreed a £2m fee – which will rise if they stay up – for their former player. Johnson will make his decision on Monday.

Derby's two new signings from Costa Rica may not be able to play for them until next season because of work permit difficulties. Derby paid about £1m for the striker Paulo Cesar Wanchope and the midfielder Mauricio Solis, who have both signed three-year contracts. Wanchope scored a hat-trick for Costa Rica in a friendly against Cameroon last Sunday.

Blackburn's caretaker manager, Tony Parkes, yesterday confirmed that several of his club's players were asked to leave a VIP lounge at the Cheltenham Festival this week. There have been media allegations of players becoming involved in alcohol-influenced escapades during a day out at the races.

"There was an incident in a VIP lounge," Parkes admitted. "The players were asked to leave and they did, watching the rest of the racing from outside. I believe it couldn't have been that bad, for they weren't asked to leave the course. That's all we've got to say. We want to nip it in the bud and concentrate back on the football."

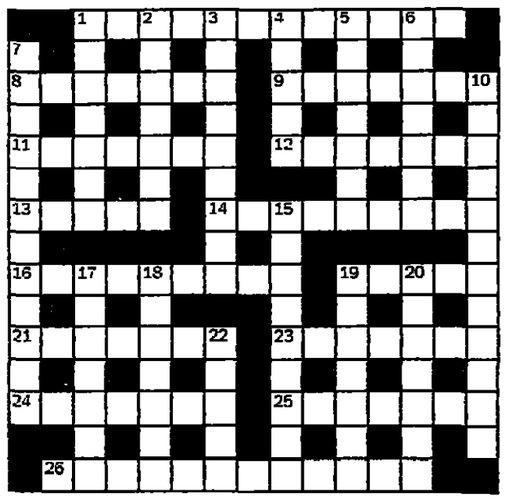
Everton have opened talks to leave Goodison Park for a purpose-built stadium in Kirkby – but the move has sparked protests from some supporters, who are angry at plans to leave the club's traditional home.

Everton's chairman, Peter Johnson, confirmed that plans for a proposed new home for the club on the site of Kirkby Municipal Golf Course were being prepared. "We are preparing artists' impressions and will publish a coupon asking for people's votes on it," he said.

Chris Whyte, the 35-year-old former Arsenal, Leeds and Charlton defender, has joined Oxford United for the rest of the season.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3247. Saturday 15 March By Mass

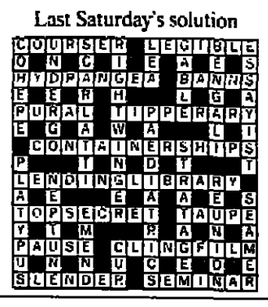


ACROSS
1 Effect of a protein cure? (12)
8 Tree, maybe among last to be logged (7)
9 Turned over, conscious (7)
11 Dressing activity introducing mini lines (7)
12 Progressively reduces, cuts back – getting too reduced (7)
13 Inferior articles from Europe (5)
14 A safe opener, you might say (9)
16 It's enough to waken the dead! (9)
19 English firm outwardly spread (5)
21 Imports goods (7)
23 Rotten hum drifting around in dwelling (7)
24 Talk incoherently with only first drop in Social Club? (7)
25 Yours truly in speech contemplated old trophy (7)
26 It could lead to scrapping EEC, rebelling in disunited way (12)

DOWN
1 Reeled off, deprived of bottle (7)
2 Seeing Italy in a trap is increasingly old-fashioned (7)
3 Drill, very keen in fit teacher (9)
4 Files South during strikes (5)
5 Plugging tee prior to drive (7)
6 Source of figures like 'paper tiger'? (7)
7 Duped, accepting English coins proving base (12)
10 Editor involved with Tass in paper (12)
15 Delayed one with notes about Cockney poet (4-5)
17 Stalking us, bear made short charge (7)
18 Description of a gig (7)
19 Designation, right, of promoted member of workforce? (7)
20 Edited manual on English retired academics (7)
22 Vault's short of new decoration (5)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the new Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: Michael Puckett, London W14; K Macintyre, London SW4; David Gould, Worsley; Alwyn Smith, Arnside; M Goss, Chichester.

Protester damages America's Cup

Sailing

The America's Cup, the oldest trophy in international sport and the most coveted prize in sailing, was badly damaged yesterday in a political protest by a 27-year-old Maori man in Auckland, New Zealand.

The 3ft high silver cup was said to be "virtually destroyed" and would have to be rebuilt following the attack at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron.

The attacker, dressed in a suit, shirt and tie, had asked to see the trophy, which is displayed in a showcase. There was no security guard in the room as he suddenly pulled a short-handled sledgehammer out of a bag slung over his shoulder and attacked the trophy case.

The man repeatedly smashed at the armoured glass casing until it broke open. He tried but failed to remove the trophy from the broken cabinet and then tore off his jacket and shirt to reveal a T-shirt emblazoned with Maori sovereignty slogans.

Nearby building workers grabbed the man, who was arrested and was due to appear in court today to face criminal damage charges. Police did not release his name but said he was a local student. A Maori separatist group that wants an independent Maori state claimed responsibility for the attack.

The trophy will be sent for repairs to England to the manufacturer, Garrards, which apparently still has the original drawings of the trophy, which was made in about 1850.

The New York Yacht Club held the cup for 132 years until 1983, when Alan Bond won it for Australia. Team New Zealand became only the second foreign crew in 144 years to take the America's Cup away from the United States when they won the trophy two years ago. Auckland, which boasts it has more yachts per capita than any city in the world, will host the next America's Cup in 1999.

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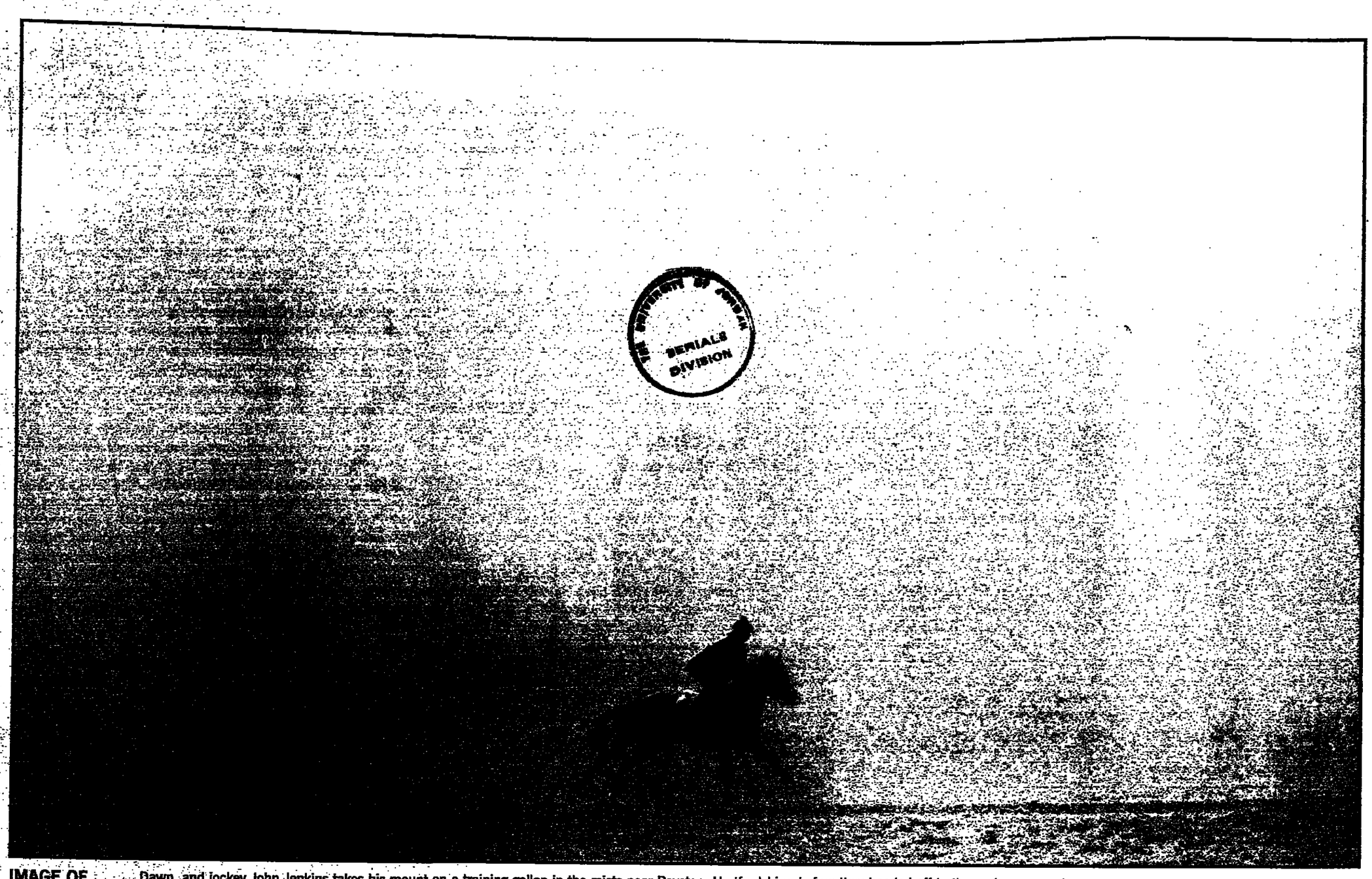

THE UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN SERIALS DIVISION

IMAGE OF THE WEEK Dawn, and jockey John Jenkins takes his mount on a training gallop in the mists near Royston, Hertfordshire, before they headed off to the excitement and glamour of the annual race meeting at Cheltenham. Photograph by Brian Harris using a 105mm lens, 2000th of a second at f16. Film: 1,000 ASA. To order a print of this picture – it costs £14 – phone 0171-293 2534

thelongweekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 15 MARCH 1997

WORDS OF THE WEEK

Two teachers injured when Thomas Hamilton ran amok in Dunblane shared their painful memories with Radio 4 presenter James Naughtie on the *Today* programme. Eileen Harrild (far left) is a PE teacher at the school and Mary Blake a teaching assistant

Eileen Harrild: Thursday's been a day we've been dreading. It's like one more hurdle we're going to have to go over and it's been almost building up and up since the turn of the New Year. We've had a lot of hurdles to cross this year and now that we're nearing the anniversary, I know it's going to be an extremely difficult day for everybody. You know, we are encouraged because of the amount of concern and love and warmth we've had from the whole community and from everybody.

James Naughtie: Mary, there must be a sense of impending relief that that moment will have passed.

Mary Blake: I think we will be pleased when we get 13 March, Thursday, over, and then, I think we'll try and focus on the future and just try to lead our lives as normally as we can.

James Naughtie: Eileen, have you found yourself more resilient than you had expected?

Eileen Harrild: I think we all have in a strange sort of way. It's amazing where you get the strength to come through something as horrendous as this. I mean, at the beginning of 1996 if anyone had said to myself or to Mary or to anybody who had been involved directly with this, what kind of year we were going to have, we would never have believed it ... I think everyone's shown great courage and strength and dignity.

Mary Blake: I think it feels quite unreal. We talk about it and I feel it's as if it hasn't happened to us and it does surprise me sometimes, when we do talk about it and it's just, as I said, so unreal.

James Naughtie: You've both coped with it while you've been recovering from your injuries. What about the children who were nearby, who were aware of the horror of the event?

Eileen Harrild: Again, I think they individually coped very differently. My daughter was in a classroom very close to the gym and there was also a classroom, as you know, that the gunman fired upon. And I think some of these children are still having a very difficult time actually, and in their own way they are having to cope with it with the help of their parents and the school and so on. I think that's one of the things that's very important, that we mustn't forget the people who were injured and the long-term effect that that's going to have on them. Some of the children were very badly injured and they're going to have to live with this. It's also just hitting home now because at the time Mary and I and the surviving children were just so grateful to be here. Now we're thinking, and we're having to cope every day with the realities of that event, and the children in particular are going to have to cope with the reality of that for the rest of their lives – and that's difficult.

James Naughtie: One of the things that strikes me is that there must be a tension between sometimes wanting to simply avoid the subject and not talk about it, but on the other hand, never wanting to feel as if you're letting go of your feelings.

Mary Blake: Eileen and I, we talk often about what happened on the day – in fact, I think every time we meet. I've said before, I am very grateful that – I know this sounds dreadful – but that there was someone else there. I find it's very comforting to have Eileen, just to have a chat, and I know that she feels exactly the same ...

Eileen Harrild: Absolutely, it's very important, as Mary said. There's only two of us who actually knew, you know, what we experienced that morning, and even within the family as much as, you know, our families and the families of those directly involved try to understand, it's very comforting for both Mary and I because, you know, the two of us survived, and we know exactly what we were going through that morning.

James Naughtie: Sometimes the town must have been under almost intolerable pressure. I don't mean from the inquisitiveness of outsiders, but just internally; the strength of the feeling, the depth of the trauma.

Eileen Harrild: I think we all need to stand back from it for a little while, otherwise tensions can arise, and we don't want that sort of thing.

Mary Blake: I find it quite difficult going down to the village. You know, they ask how I am, how I'm feeling, and some days if you're having a really bad day you don't really want to say I'm feeling dreadful. You just say, "I'm fine", and really there are days when we're not fine.

James Naughtie: People talk about good coming from bad, meaning that we shouldn't forget about the bad, but there are things that you can look forward to. What do you hope for? What do you look forward to?

Eileen Harrild: I'm looking forward to trying to have some more normality in my life because he past year there has really not been normality. And to getting a physical as well as a spiritual and emotional recovery from this – it would be very helpful for us in Dunblane. And normality would return if we could feel that we had this [gun] ban, and that this sort of thing could never happen again. That was always the bottom line for us – that nothing like this could ever happen again with legal guns. I would like to see that we learn from this and we are more vigilant in what's happening to our children and what sort of toys they are playing with. You know, you wouldn't see a toy gun in Dunblane now, never. I think we have to be vigilant of what our children are watching on television, what kind of videos we are allowing the children to view, because they absorb the violence into their system. Mary and I know what it feels like when a bullet hits you, and it's not what they show on these screens.

James Naughtie: You've both talked about this anniversary as something that needs to be marked properly with dignity, but you've also talked about, in some sense, moving on after it is passed. How is it that you can start to keep the memory of the children with you, but at the same time somehow begin to distance yourself from the events of the past year?

Eileen Harrild: That's a very difficult question to answer. I think part of the way Mary and I coped was by distancing ourselves from it from the very beginning, because we couldn't take on just how awful it was anyway at the very beginning. The first anniversary, I think, is an extremely important landmark for everybody in the whole community of Dunblane. We're hoping that we'll be able to pick up the pieces of our lives, move forward, never forgetting.

James Naughtie: Do you want people to light candles on Thursday?

Mary Blake: Oh yes, I think that's very important. It'll be nice to know that everybody is thinking about us and the families.

Eileen Harrild: And the children, and that their light shines on and that although they are no longer here they are still loved and there's a little piece of them in all our hearts.

INSIDE

John Walsh meets Helen Storey

... and finds she wants to do things a dreamlike way **page 3**

The history of slavery put to jazz

Wynton Marsalis's captivating 'Blood on the Fields' **page 5**

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FREE GREENHOUSE
WITH THIS MONTH'S VEGETARIAN GOOD FOOD

BBC Vegetarian Good Food *magazine* doesn't just contain great recipe ideas for when you don't want to eat meat. This month's issue comes with a free 24 page supplement – 'Easy Ways to a Green Home'. Find out how to save energy and money in the home, how to shop with a conscience, and which appliances are greenest for your kitchen.

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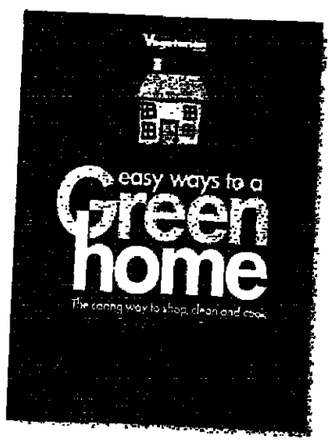


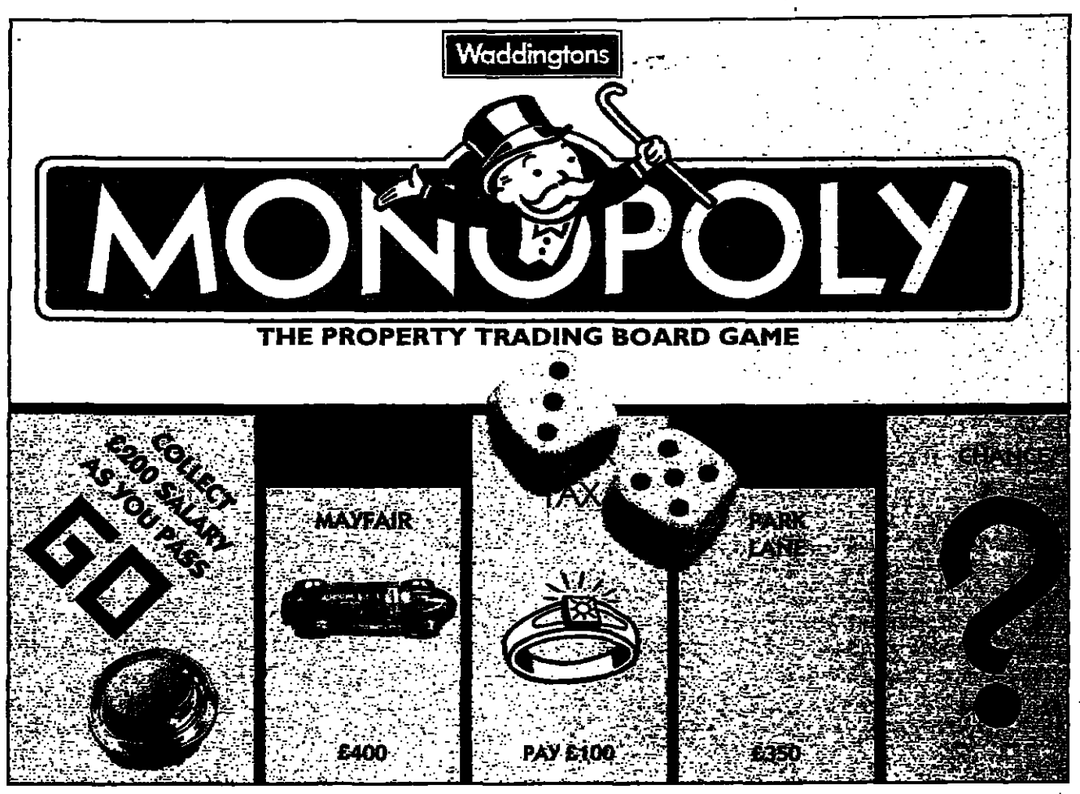
Advance to Marlborough Street

William Hartston explains how to thrash the children at Monopoly.

No game can be quite so popular, or unappreciated, as Monopoly. After more than 60 years in the shops, it is still the best-selling board game of all, yet in the opinion of Mike Grabsky, "99 per cent of people don't know how to play Monopoly". Many of us think we know how to play, of course, but we have probably never read the rules carefully enough to appreciate the level of strategy that the game allows. In Mr Grabsky's opinion, luck plays a far smaller part than most players realise. "It's a more skilful game than backgammon," he says. There are two keys to good Monopoly: one is to comprehend the basic economics of the game; the other is to understand why it was called Monopoly in the first place.

Actually, it wasn't called Monopoly in the first place. It started life as "The Landlord's Game", invented by Elizabeth Magie and patented in 1903. She saw it, however, as not so much a game as a moral lesson against the social evils of property speculators and unscrupulous landlords. Despite her high ideas and Quaker beliefs, however, it gained a good deal of popularity and began to be played in university circles around Maryland and Pennsylvania. Over the next 30 years, the rules were gradually refined and improved. In the 1920s, it began to be known under the name "Monopoly" (despite Ms Magie's disapproval). Finally, in 1933, an unemployed engineer named Charles Darrow, who is generally credited as the game's inventor, came across it, and saw its potential. He redesigned the board, borrowed the trinkets from his wife's charm bracelet to serve as the pieces, and started marketing it properly. Omitting to mention that the game was not his own invention, he submitted it to Parker Games – who identified 52 serious faults and turned it down. Two years later, however, when Darrow had sold 5,000 copies by his own efforts, they changed their mind. By autumn 1935, Parker were making 20,000 games a week to keep up with demand.

The name of "Monopoly", however, comes from an elemnt in good strategy that few players appreciate. The complete set contains 32 green houses, and once those have been used up, no more properties may be developed until they are converted to hotels, or sold back to the bank. So one consequence is that if, for example, a player builds four houses on each of the three properties of two colour sets, it will use up 24 houses in all, leaving only eight to be fought over by the other players. You can take a large step towards bankrupting the other players by gaining a virtual monopoly over the housing market. That is why it is generally a mistake to build hotels. Four houses earn less rent, but considerably restrict the opponents' possibilities



Landing on a hotel on Vine Street will cost you £1800 – but a better player might have stopped the building at four houses.

Apart from monopolising the houses, the most important aspect of strategy is to calculate your return on investment properly. Greedy amateurs may go for the Mayfair and Park Lane set, but the economics argue against it. The pair of properties cost £750, with development costs of £200 a house. So to build one house on each involves a total outlay of £1150, which will provide a total rent-roll of £375. By contrast, the orange set, Marlborough Street, Vine Street and Bow Street, cost a total of £560. For another £500 you can put two houses on two of the properties and one on the other, giving a total rent roll of £510.

Mayfair and Park Lane only begin to repay the investment when developed to the three-house level, and that is rarely possible early in the game. Only when the supply has been inflated by sufficient bonuses of £200 for passing Go is there sufficient money in the economy to allow the development of the high-price sites.

There's another thing too that makes the orange set a good bet: because of the "Go to Jail" square, and the Chance and Community Chest cards that have the same effect, the Jail square is the one most frequently occupied. And since the majority of dice throws are in the range from five to nine, when anyone gets out of Jail he has a good chance of landing on one of the oranges.

This chance may be calculated precisely, as may other statistical aspects of the game. For example, since the average dice throw is seven, each player has a one-in-seven chance of landing on any individual square on each circuit of the board. Your expected income is therefore approximately one seventh of your total rent roll per circuit, per player. (This calculation is actually made a little more complex by the rule about having an extra turn when you throw a double, but even that may be taken into acount if you really want to do things precisely.)

The main skill at the game, however, comes not in making such calculations, but in the negotiating skills needed to tempt the other players into doing the deals that enable you to form sets in the first place. According to Mike Grabsky, each game starts with about half-an-hour of quiet play, when everyone goes round the board accumulating properties, but there comes a moment when everyone realises that progress can only be made – or one player can only be stopped – if some deals are done. Then play stops and you all start haggling. This is the vital moment and, according to Mr Grabsky, "it can get slightly nasty." It's vital not to be excluded from the deals, so sometimes you have to resort to threats. "If you don't sell me Trafalgar Square, I'll give Vine Street to Fred, and then you'll stand no chance." But the key to it all is to appear believable and trustworthy while having the mentality of a city trader.

Finally, here's another rule you've never read properly: "If a limited number of houses or hotels is left and two or more players wish to buy more than the Bank has, the Banker auctions them off to the highest bidder, starting at the lowest price shown on the relevant title deeds." Under such circumstances, houses on Mayfair and Park Lane may become a very attractive proposition. But nobody ever wins with the green set. Now go back to your constituencies and prepare to beat your kids at Monopoly.

New Game of the Week

Around 1970, in a TV series called *Me Mammy*, Milo O'Shea enjoyed a game of "Pope-opoly" with ecclesiatiscal figurines moved around a board, and cards bearing such messages as: "Go to Hell. Go directly to Hell. Do not pass through purgatory. Do not collect 200 plenary indulgences."

Sadly Pope-opoly was never marketed. But "Seven Steps to Heaven" (£26.99 from ET Games, PO Box 3579, Redditch, Worcs. B98 0HS. Tel: 01527-520608) may be the next best thing.

Answering religious questions entitles you to move around a board. Each complete circuit moves you higher on the seven-step plastic pyramid to heaven. But: "Players cannot win the game, even when the top step is reached, if they have more Lucifer tokens than Angel Gabriel tokens." But no wooden bishops and no going to Hell. Verdict: Might liven up vicarage tea parties. Only for the devout.

Cult of the Week

Following our launch of the cult of 103-ism last week, we have received news of several sightings including the following information from Samantha Hamilton:

"I enclose the following exciting discovery concerning the number 103 bus, running between Romford and the Rainham War Memorial. Adding together the positions in the alphabet of the letters in the destinations. ROMFORD (18+15+13+6+15+18+4) = 89, while RAINHAM WAR MEMORIAL similarly adds up to a total of 192. Thus Rainham War Memorial (192) minus Romford (89) equals 103. Amazing isn't it."

Don Stallybrass also informs us that 103 is the number of asteroid Hera, which was in beautiful aspect to Christine, Karen and Henry last week. We could be on to something very important here. More 103s later.

Games people play

Brian Sewell teaches **Pandora Melly** the joy of chess

Christopher Silvester, 37, writer and journalist.

I can remember having lots of Civil War soldiers. You lined them up and conducted fantasy manoeuvres like any child. I was very normal in that sense, except that I never played ordinary children's games; I hated football and cricket, and wouldn't go near a rugby ball. I remember going to pre-school and being encouraged to box. I was five or six, I think.

There was a period when I played a lot of snooker – in its cruder form where you can have fun based on pure fluke shots. Ordinary snooker is rather boring unless you have some skill. I made a couple of attempts to become a tennis player but without any lasting result, and I've had a stab at golf – my father is a golfer, my mother and stepfather too.

The three things that really grip me are a film, a book or a conversation, whereas playing games or taking part in organised activities my mind wanders. I suppose you could say there's a lot of gamesmanship in the art of conversation, and certainly in seduction, where the rules are constantly changing. Of course I'm a bit of a fraud really, because I like playing with other people's emotions, but I'm not very keen when they do it to me.

I'm one of those people who always have to have rules explained to them over and over again. Poker is the only game I actually like. There are many variants: Texas Hold 'em, which is much favoured by professional gamblers; Seven Card Stud and Ho-Lo. I had my first game of bridge recently and did quite well. I can see myself becoming a bridge player in time; it's the sort of thing my mother encourages me to do.

I wish I'd been forced to learn ballroom dancing.

Get happy with Victor Silvester and his Orchestra "In a Dancing Mood" and other titles on CD. £2.49 to £11.99 from Virgin Record Shops (0500-120012 for stores nationwide).

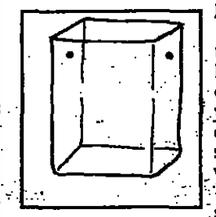
Don't junk it … use it

From washing machine to pencil case

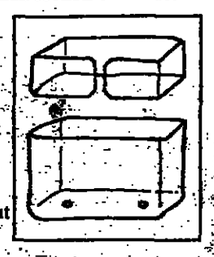
All you need for this elegant and original pencil case is two identical fabric softener bottles and a nice piece of string of the type you find on the handles of shopping bags provided by the better stores in Knightsbridge.

Some people, when shown this design, suggest that one might equally make it from shampoo bottles, but that, of course, overlooks the fact that you have already used all your empty shampoo bottles to make computer mouse holders.

Anyway, you start by cutting off the top of one container to leave the piece that will serve as the body of the pencil case. Make two holes in it as shown in the lower diagram on the left.



The other portion, hereinafter to be referred to as the lid, is made by cutting the other bottle lower down. Now comes the clever bit. To ensure that the lid fits the container snugly, you cut a thick slice from the remainder of one of the bottles. Snip a small section out of the slice, to ensure that it will fit inside the lid.



Use glue or double-sided sticky-tape to fix this strip inside the lid, with half its width protruding. The sticking-out bit then fits into the top of the case to hold the lid on.

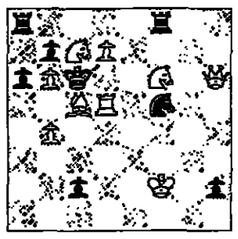
By making two holes in the lid, you may also attach lid to case by threading your piece of decorative string through the holes, forming a carrying handle, while also holding the case shut and ensuring that you don't lose the lid.

Do you have any good ideas for recycling objects that would otherwise be thrown away? If so we should be delighted to hear from you at: Don't Junk It, The Games Page, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. We hope to recycle the best ideas at a later date in this column.

Bawn O'Beirne-Ranelagh

The games page is edited by William Hartston

Chess William Hartston



This splendid problem by Kraemer and Zepler won first prize in a composing tournament in 1935. It is White to play and mate in three.

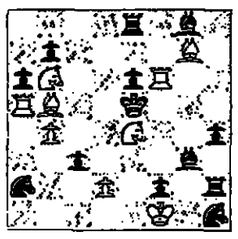
With Black's king surrounded, it looks as though it ought too be easy, but most mating attempts run into the same problem: as soon as White moves his knight from f6 to open the line from his queen to the black king, he runs into a discovered check on the f-file. White could eliminate the troublesome knight with 1.Rxf5, but that abandons the rook's defence of the d7-pawn and lets Black survive until beyond move three with 1...Rxf6.

What White needs is either another way to get at the black king with his queen, or a way to get his own king away from the problems on the f-file. The solution accomplishes this in an astonishing manner.

White begins 1.Ke1!! apparently walking into a variety of ambushes; but look what happens. The threat is 2.Ng4+ Nxh6 3.Ne5 mate. If 1...c1=Q+ 2.Qxc1 h1=Q+, White mates with 3.Bg1. (Or if Black checks with a rook on e8 on the second move od this line, then 3.Be3 is mate).

If Black tries promoting his pawns the other way round with 1...h1=Q+ 2.Qxh1 c1=Q+, then 3.Rd1 is mate (or 2...Re8+ 3.Re5 mate). Finally, and perhaps most difficult to spot, if 1...Rae8+ 2.Nxe8+ Rf6. White mates with 3.d8=N!

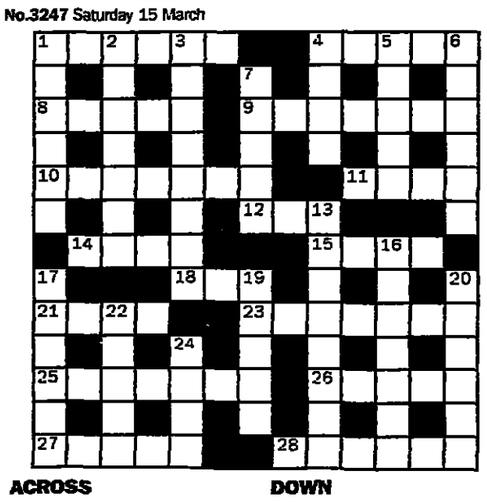
The idea of walking White's king into a barrage of checks is reminiscent of another classic three-move problem by Sam Loyd.



Here White is ready to deliver discovered checks on the fifth rank and on the long black diagonal, but his difficulty lies in providing a guard for the e4 and d4 squares. The main line of the solution is quite extraordinary: 1.Ke2!! f1=Q+ 2.Ke3!! when any check from the black queen, bishop or rook is met by a discovered mate. The other variations I leave you to work out on your own.

concise crossword

No.3247 Saturday 15 March



ACROSS

1 Make of car (6)
4 Herb (5)
8 Channels for fluids (5)
9 Defensive structure (7)
10 Young hare (7)
11 Agitation (4)
12 Cut (3)
14 Operatic song (4)
15 German wine (4)
18 Rabble (3)
21 European capital (4)
23 Replies (7)
25 Olympic sport (7)
26 Passenger ship (5)
27 Cattle farm (5)
28 Besiegers of Troy (6)

DOWN

1 Centre (6)
2 Get back (7)
3 Towards source (8)
4 Large volume (4)
5 Raising agent (5)
6 Complete (6)
7 Anger (5)
13 US-born painter (8)
16 Purify (7)
17 Consult together (6)
19 Canal boat (5)
20 Egyptian deity (6)
22 Cloth (5)
24 Desire (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Peace, 4 Super (Pea-souper), 10 Cleaver, 11 Fever, 12 Low-al, 13 Network, 15 Rake, 17 Buoys, 19 Lease, 22 Test, 25 Invalid, 27 Cushy, 29 Priam, 30 Chinese, 31 Using, 32 Agate. DOWN: 2 Elegy, 3 Cavalry, 5 Unfit, 6 Envious, 7 Scold, 8 Prank, 9 Broke, 14 Eels, 16 Asti, 18 Unveils, 20 Etching, 21 Hippo, 23 Edit, 24 Byres, 26 Lemon, 28 Sweat.

Apology – Today's Magazine Crossword No.92

Two clues are incomplete. 34 down should read: Last place to rest closed before American tramp turned up (4). 35 down is: Cheers participant in pageant – a star! (4, hyphenated)

Bridge Alan Hiron

Love all; dealer South

North
♠8 6
♡A K
◊10 4 2
♣K J 7 6 5 4

West
♠A Q 9 4 2
♡J 9 7
◊K 8 6 5
♣Q

East
♠10 7 3
♡Q 10 8
◊Q 9 7
♣10 9 8 3

South
♠K J 5
♡6 5 4 3 2
◊A J 3
♣A 2

There was an unusual safety play for declarer lurking on this deal from rubber bridge. Would you have seen it?

To set the scene: South, with his filthy five-card major, opened 1NT (12-14 points) rather than 1♡. West overcalled with 2♠ to leave North with a problem. Would a bid of 3♣ be taken as forcing? It looked as though an invitational rise to 2NT was a possibility, but North reasoned that (a) if the club suit "marched" there could easily be at least nine tricks, and (b) if the clubs did not behave there might not even be eight. So he boldly bid 3NT and all passed.

West led ♠4 against 3NT and declarer won East's 10 with his jack. Clearly the clubs had to be brought in and, equally clearly, East had to be kept out of the lead.

South, I am sorry to report, made the natural looking start of ♣A at trick two. This would have wporked well if West had held ♣Q,x or ♣Q,x,x, or if East had started with ♣Q alone or ♣Q,x – there would have been no temptation to finesse on the second round if both opponents had followed low. As the cards lay, there was no way to establish the clubs and keep East off lead. Consequently the contract failed.

Any ideas? What about ♣2 at trick two? Now declarer is home and dry in all the situations where the ace and another club would have succeeded and – wait for it – also as the cards lie, when all he has to do is allow West to hold the trick with his ♣Q. On lead, West can do no harm and declarer has five club tricks, two hearts, a spade and a diamond.

Perplexity

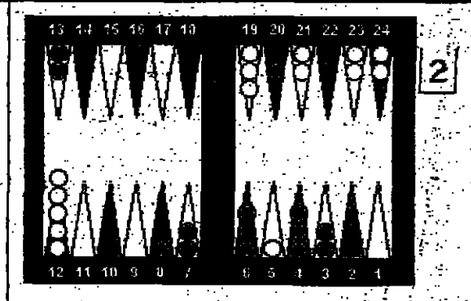
Mixed Doubles

Eve, raping acorn, grins lie handy.

The above sentence conceals three loosely connected answers. All you have to do to find them is to group the six words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair. The sender of the first correct answer opened on 26 March will win a copy of the new Chambers *21st Century Dictionary*. Answers to: Perplexity, the *Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.

1 March answers:
BRAINS plus BRAINS equals ANSWER works out as 469138+469138 = 938276, so SWINE = 82137
Winner: Jack Norwood (Leavenheath, Colchester).

Backgammon Chris Bray



I reached this position in the "quarters" chouette in New York. (NB: in the US, they devalue everything by 100: a nickel game is actually $5 a point, a dime $10, a quarter $25 and so on.) How should Black play a 5-1?

I argued long and hard that we should play 13/8, 6/5*. He did not like the risk of having two blots exposed and wanted to play 8/2, arguing that we could hit later, and that White would have trouble clearing all the men on his mid-point. We couldn't agree, but my partner was the captain in this three-handed chouette, so he played his move. White won some moves later when he redoubled us out in what had become a race. But who was right?

Back to basics. Black has given the cube away so White is in the game to the end. So Black must win using his men; he can never double White out. He has two possible plans: (a) he can close out White's last man (or get it behind a full prime), (b) he can race (Black trails by one pip after the roll) and hope to hit a shot as White brings his men around the board.

My thinking was: If White doesn't hit one of my blots I am very likely to close him out completely or at least get his man behind a 5 or 6 point prime. This will lock up the game and I will win a large number of gammons as well, because of the number of men White still has to bring home. If he hits one of my blots I have a secure anchor in his board and there will be many further chances to win as White will be a long way from a redouble. But if I play 8/2 I don't see a clear path to victory and the game will become a toss-up. Therefore I want to be aggressive and hit.

Years of experience proved to be right – later roll-outs showed the hitting play is much stronger. It leads to more wins and many more gammons and, after all, it is backed up by the oldest backgammon adage of all: "When in doubt, hit".

TURN TO PAGE 29... for the weather, sky at night, Jasper Rees on TV, Robert Hanks on radio and Damion Hurts the cartoon sage of artistic angst

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

The designer survivor

Helen Storey: handling the How-are-the-Mighty-fallen stuff well, and biding her time PHOTO: NICOLA KURTZ

John Walsh meets... Helen Storey

When Helen Storey was five years old, she was accidentally locked in a linen cupboard while playing hide and seek with her sister and brothers in the crepuscular basement flat in Belsize Park, north London where they all grew up. Rather than panic or collapse in childish tears, after 10 minutes in the darkness, "I started looking round for things to do. And I found my mother's wedding dress, inside a plastic bag. So I decided to try and work out which fabrics were which, just by touch alone – what was net, what was lining, what was boning, what was lace – and try to get a picture of the dress in my head. Everything just seemed to carry on from there..." *Everything* here means 11 years of being fêted as one of the most innovative and dynamic fashion designers in the UK.

Claustrophobia and darkness may not seem very likely seedbeds of creativity to the likes of you or me, but the texture-loving Ms Storey is different. She has a perverse streak a mile wide. Her deliriously rackety childhood was devoted to chronic shape-changing. She tried successively to convince as "tomboy, hippie, skinhead, punk and glamour queen", never quite settling into one image for long enough. The iconic figure in her mind was, oddly, Edith Piaf. "I was attracted to her very early on – not her looks but her life. My mother used to play her records. I remember her humming '*Je ne regrette rien*' over the ironing board, and her songs were in my head from an early age." But all that tragedy (I protested), the drugs, those ghastly men she got tied up with... Storey raised a sophisticated eyebrow. "I'm always attracted to people with trauma in their lives," she said. "I like it. There's something very real and gritty about people who've been through trauma. I like the blatant way they live their lives thereafter."

She should know. Helen Storey has had more than her share of upset, tragedy and heartbreak, her troubles coming not in single spies but in battalions: just as she was fighting to keep her million-spinning frock house afloat, her husband Ron (the company's financial director) discovered he had cancer – a T-cell lymphoma was spreading through his head, making him deaf and blind. He retired to bed for a year. Just as he began to recover, the business collapsed in ruins and its proprietor went on the dole. And as she was considering what to do next, the couple split up, overwhelmed by the strains on their relationship of illness and receivership combined.

Since then, she has made a living only through writing – a memoir of her traumas in the rag trade and the cancer ward called *Fighting Fashion*, and the beginnings of a career as a journalist, writing features for national newspapers. The day we met, at a noisy café in Islington, she had just come hot-foot from interviewing Katharine Hamnett, the formidable progenitor of a million XL white T-shirts bearing the legend "58% DON'T WANT PERSHING". "She didn't tell me anything I didn't already know, but that was OK," said the new cub reporter. "I had a list of questions to ask, for which I needed answers, but she talked to me as a person rather than as someone who'd gone there to do a job. I thought she was very charming and very strong." Did it feel a little odd asking another designer the kind of things a journalist might ask? "The thing I like about *not* designing," she said smartly, "is getting to talk to designers. I love asking the kind of questions we wouldn't have dreamt of asking each other when we were all designers together."

A suspicious bunch, journalists tend to be rather sniffy about having newcomers, whether resting actors or deselected MPs, invading their ranks from other disciplines. But it would take a heart of stone to deny Storey a chance to shine. Our meeting in the café was delayed for several minutes as I prowled ineffectually round the tables trying to spot a woman who corresponded to the image in my head of an ethereal, wispy-haired, Biba-meets-Burne-Jones dreamboat in a Monsoon frock. "If she's anyone in this establishment," I told myself, "she certainly can't be that strong-looking woman with the severely yanked-back hair and *sub fusculum* sweatshirt and chinos coolly regarding me from the window seat...".

She was, of course. Storey, in her new incarnation as The Survivor, is a stripped-down, unpainted, clear-sighted, bullshit-detecting version of the creative idealist who once flogged sequinned corsets and tight black PVC second-skins to the likes of Cher, Madonna and Sandra Bernhardt. She is more Gloria Gaynor than Edith Piaf these days. Her large and beautiful eyes regard you steadily, eyes that have stared death and financial ruin in the face. Her air of ineffable melancholy is occasionally subverted by a hearty laugh. She is warily friendly with strangers, as if convinced everything might go wrong (some cataclysmic misunderstanding) at any moment. But by the time you leave her side, you experience the strong feeling (a pretty rare one in interviews) that she deserves your support and you must go and do something about it *right now*. You must help her out. You must visit the banks who pulled the plug on her company, and condemn them, loudly and in public. You must comb the streets of Islington to find her a new backer...

"I'm not waiting for a backer any more," she says shortly. "I went through all that. I'm not in a state of mind for a career at *anything*. Having made a career in fashion very quickly, I'm not sure I want to go back to it in the same way as before."

How much of a designer is she still? "Oh, I'm *purely* a designer. What makes me one is that I design from an emotional standpoint, rather than a practical one."

You mean your clothes aren't wearable? She smiled. "Well, no, occasionally they're not. And I think it's important that some parts of a collection *aren't* wearable. They're the future. They're the couture thought, if you like, and from it you can, if you're clever, commercialise it so it fits in with what everyone else is doing." She is very keen on what she calls "the Dream-world", that is, the adventure playground of sculpted fabrics and clashing textures where the creative side of a designer's brain can disport itself without having to worry about what the passing trade in the High Street will make of it. "While I respect the High Street, and it's clearly what everybody wants, I have to be myself, which means doing things in a dream-like way. Although – "she bridled, just slightly, "I must have done *something* wearable, since I was trading for 11 years."

> **‘Her large and beautiful eyes regard you steadily, the eyes that have stared death and financial ruin in the face’**

She is the daughter of David Storey, the distinguished novelist and playwright who published *This Sporting Life* in 1960, won the Booker Prize in 1976 with *Saville* and whose plays – *In Celebration, Home, The Contractor* – were massively applauded in the Seventies, a decade when his work seemed to be a fixture at the Royal Court theatre in Sloane Square. Still only 63, his readers have not heard from him in some years, but, says his daughter, "he's just fine. He's at that stage of his life where he feels he doesn't have to publish anything just for the sake of publishing it." It's with a slight *frisson* that you recall Storey studied at the Slade art school. Is that where his daughter's designer genes came from? Had he taught her anything? "Apart from putting a crayon in my hand, no." Was the house filled with her dad's pictures? "No. It was full of pictures by Philip Sutton, who was with him at the Slade. Those and the odd poster from one of his plays."

Helen recalls hanging out at the Royal Court at rehearsals of her father's plays – "it was like a second home to him, the other workplace outside his bedroom" – and meeting all manner of famous actors. "But as a child you've no sense of who they are or their greatness. They were just nice blokes or they're not. So I thought Gielgud was very withdrawn and Ralph Richardson was very warm." (Both men were starring in *Home*.)

At Hampstead Comprehensive, a school of hard knocks rather nearer Finchley than Flask Walk, she was pulled between twin impulses to be a ballet dancer or a punk, and endured the attacks of some deeply unpleasant youths who terrorised the corridors, groped her nascent breasts and stabbed at her with metal rulers. "My father firmly believed in comprehensive education," she calmly recalls, "and was very disillusioned when he found out through me it wasn't working."

Helen wasn't working either, however, preferring to hit nightclubs and drink unfeasible quantities with her friend Sophie. Then one night, after smashing milk bottles and taking a swing at a policeman, she wound up in the cells. Sprung by her father at 4am, she abruptly stopped being a rebel. At Kingston Poly, she did an art foundation course and discovered a feel for clothes. "I loved experiments. I've always liked mistakes, which is commercially and professionally a dangerous thing to like. But I wasn't sure if I was going to be a sculptor, a painter or whatever. I was into making clothes that weren't 'made', putting together clothes without stitching. I made a knitted jumper full of holes and threaded with red ribbons, so the body inside would look like a human maypole. The head of the school came round and took my dabblings and mistakes for originality."

Such modesty. But none of it counted anyway, since she got a job at the Valentino salon in Rome and learned about the weirdly unreal, court-of-Versailles collective of neurotic enthusiasts and sycophantic popinjays that flap and fluster around a major-league designer; how a design on a sheet of paper is transformed (her words) "by a form of glorious madness" into a hundred frocks and jackets and blouses and unstructured frou-frou in the Paris shops.

She started her own label and opened her own shop in Newburgh Street, London, in 1984. Her first catwalk show, in 1990, was titled "Rage" and featured some coolly extravagantly sights – abbreviated sequinned shorts, lycra leotards in pop-art abstracts, a battle-field *brassiere* covered in bullets and a rose. Later, her tastes got wilder. Wherever you looked, there were draughty cutaway garments that sometimes looked like terrible accidents (the evening dress with cut-away bottom caused a lot of fuss). She dealt in festishistic materials like rubber and latex, and threw in some Moschino-like subversions of the whole opulent fashion circus, making dresses out of council bin-liners, a boa out of scraps, a ballgown out of men's shirts sewn together. "I did it out of guilt, I think, guilt at being a fashion designer. I thought you were supposed to hate your job, you were there to make money. Then I realised you could make money from doing what you enjoyed. Then I worried that it wasn't really a profession. And my answer was to make something out of rubbish. Something's always drawn me down to more earthy things..."

Noting the trouble her excesses have caused in the past (in one show, the models had to parade up and down their faces hidden behind the heads of birds or the antlers of deer), I wondered if she concerned herself over the dignity of the human body. Was she in the business of dehumanising it? "Hmmm. Rather selfishly. I often think of the body as just part of my design process. I don't design to protect the body. But the part of my work that's most publicised only accounts for about three per cent of what I do. Behind the dress with the bare arse, there's 10 versions of it, complete with arse, and they're the ones that end up selling in Paris."

The story of her success and where it all went is documented in *Fighting Fashion*, plainly told and full of nightmares, as huge orders come in from America ("One order was a quarter of a million quid, which for a little girl was a lot of money. It was for thousands of dozens of items – we had to add extra columns on the order forms") and she discovers that the banks won't underwrite her against losses. She will be appearing at the ICA on 24 March to talk about her experiences. What advice will she give aspirant designers? Don't go into fashion? Don't trust banks. "The only real answer is: leave. Go abroad. Certainly get the clothes made abroad. And if you can, get financed from there too. The other thing is not to rely on third parties. I really admire Katharine Hamnett, who's grown her whole company off the back of her income, without any bank loans. It's the same with Paul Smith. They're probably the biggest successes we've got at home and look how they managed without any outsiders."

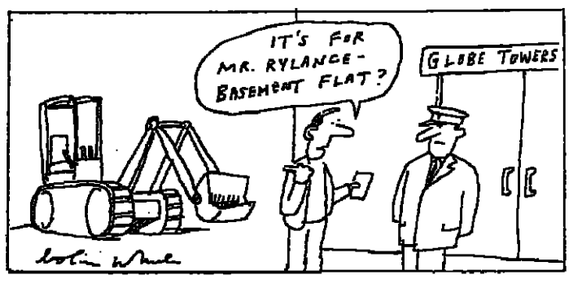
She has to run. Storey has to take her son Luke, 10, to a football match. "Every bloody weekend is training," she says fondly. "That and the Spice Girls..." After that she'll go back to her modest house in Willesden Green, to write her interview and worry about where the next cheque is coming from. Storey is handling the fallen-idol stuff very well, considering the losses she has sustained – of love, money, career, success, profit, reputation, stuff like that. The only thing that stops you swearing undying fealty to this resilient heroine is the certain knowledge that she'll be back in business before the year is out. She may despise the fashion business for its flakiness, its volatility, the things it did to her; but you just know the enraptured little girl in her soul will always be around, fingering fabrics in the dark.

David Lister
arts notebook

We await the rewrite of *Henry V* by Sir Jocelyn Stevens and his lieutenants at English Heritage. Something along the lines of "Can we cram upon this wooden 'O' a luxury block of flats, an office block perhaps?" On Wednesday, I stood outside the fenced-off site of the original Globe Theatre – the famous wooden 'O' – with Mark Rylance, the artistic director of the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe a few hundred yards away and the actress Zoë Wanamaker, whose late father was the guiding spirit behind the project.

They were bewailing the decision of English Heritage to outlaw any further excavations on the buried ruins of the theatre. The empty Grade II listed building that stands above it is to be converted into luxury flats and English Heritage say further excavations would mean the building's demolition. Nonsense, says Rylance. They would not disturb the flats at all with the minimal drilling that the research needs. But English Heritage is adamant and Southwark Borough Council has decreed "the permanent burial and commemoration" of the Globe's remains.

The research into the original Globe would have determined the size and shape of the stage of Shakespeare's theatre. Rylance's eyes blazed as he compared it to finding a new play. Cutting off this research mid-stream is something we might expect of property developers, but of the government's advisory body on preserving our heritage! It is simply scandalous. I would go much further than Rylance and ask why there has to be a building above the original Globe at all. Aren't there enough luxury flats in London? Shakespeare's theatre should be excavated completely and become a tourist attraction and centre of scholarship and historical research in itself. It would be in America, where they seem to honour England's heritage rather more than does English Heritage.



Here is a joke told at the Comedy Store in London last Monday. What do you call a cloud with legs? Answer: a sheep. And it wasn't even the way he tells 'em. The Comedy Store was hosting an evening of German humour with a gathering of German comedians giving a bemused, if not always amused, audience an insight into that country's famous funny bone. Here is another joke that failed to have them wetting themselves. "Captain Kirk had to get the Starship Enterprise fixed. He asked Scotty how long it would take. Scotty answered, four weeks." Geddit? I'll explain anyway. Apparently waiting four weeks to have even a terrestrial contraption fixed in Germany is unthinkable. Not surprisingly, this concept didn't translate very well. The funniest moment for me came when one of the German comedians questioned the Comedy Store management backstage about the billing for the evening which was called: "They always win on penalties." It's just a joke, he was assured. "But it's not true. We have a better football team," the baffled comic insisted. Euro-comedy may be one area where we will never get a single currency.

A press release arrives from architect Sir Norman Foster saluting the success of a campaign he "launched last year" to clear car-parking from Horse Guards Parade in London. Could this campaign be in any way related to the campaign we launched in *The Independent* in 1994 to clear car-parking from Horse Guards Parade in London? Sir Norman is not alone. At least one other newspaper has claimed the campaign as its own. *C'est la vie*.

More importantly, it is worth remembering that our campaign to clear parked cars from cultural and historic buildings and surrounding spaces has not yet had total success. Horse Guards is a victory, despite the squeals of anger from Downing Street civil servants who parked there. The Royal Academy and the Courtauld Institute are certainly on the way to removing cars from their historic forecourts. But the British Museum, our biggest tourist attraction, is proving intractable. Its forecourt, which could have sculptures and an outdoor café, is blocked with staff cars. Shame on them.

arts & books

Mean, moody and magnificent

POP Moody Blues *Royal Albert Hall, London*

"I'm just a singer in a rock 'n' roll band." But Justin, what's with the "just"? You are mega-rich, you've sold 60 million albums and tonight sold out the Albert Hall as well.

Like a sonic seal you and the, ahem, boys basked in a warm pool of appreciation based on long years of loving fandom and at least three greatest hits albums. You sang this crowd out of puberty in the Sixties, through love and marriage in the Seventies, into the suburbs with their kids in the Eighties, and will still be entertaining them in rounded middle-age when the millennium dawns.

And they are going to make you even richer. If they haven't yet replaced their vinyl copies of *On the Threshold of a Dream* and *To Our Children's Children's Children* with digitally re-mastered CDs, they will. For a cohort of The Generation, some Moody Blues tracks – "Tuesday Afternoon", "Question" – are going to be played for ever and ever, amen.

As for being an rock 'n roll "band", at the Albert Hall there was a full symphony orchestra, two percussion sets, two keyboard kits, two backing singers as well, of course, as Justin Hayward and John Lodge on guitar, Graeme Edge on whimsical verse and drums and Ray Thomas on flute, tambourine, harp and the sweet, if rather stiff, body movements of a 55-year-old. All that, two cylinders of dry ice and a stroboscopic lighting scheme which gave us enough quasi-psychedelic blobs and whirls to remind us of days of future passed.

To call Justin Hayward and the Moody Blues a rock band is a bit like calling David Frost a satirist – a past identity has given way to something altogether grander. The Blues are an institution. The concert programme called them "rock's most vital and unique resource". In their time much imitated, they can claim to have invented the concept album: they first used a mellotron and gave us rock with big string backing. They are the group that launched a thousand AOR stations.

"Age has not withered them," said a poet a little more original than Graeme Edge. (He got the embarrassment of his versifying out of the way at the start of the show when he came on in the dark and intoned several lines of numbing banality that it takes a real fan to stomach.) No, age has been relatively kind to a band that always had that soft chasing-the-clouds-away side to it. Justin Hayward and John Lodge did a bit of business along the stage front with their guitars but it's parody and we all laughed.

Committed, gut-churning rock, it wasn't. What this "greatest hits" concern offered was two well-turned back-catalogue sets, showcasing each of the four in turn. Musically, the orchestral arrangements were not elaborate. The Moody Blues have not "grown" since the summer of '69. But why tamper with a winning formula?

"I know you're out there somewhere," Jason sang. He did not have to look far. Before arthritis sets in, the Moody Blues will sell out big venues as often as they care to play them.

David Walker

Felicity Kendal as Amy (right), seduced by Michael Pennington's maverick MP PHOTOGRAPH: GERAINT LEWIS

Laying waste the idealist

Harley Granville Barker's play casts a penetrating eye on political sleaze

THEATRE Waste *Old Vic, London*

The Peter Hall Company's repertory season at the Old Vic gets off to a stimulating start now with his production of Harley Granville Barker's *Waste*. "Sex, sleaze and politics for the general election," runs the ad, which would sound a shade opportunistic or a more suitable selling line for some Doug Lucie drama, if it weren't for the fact that Barker actually delivers in all those departments.

A famous casualty of censorship, this play was refused a licence in 1907 on the ostensible grounds of its outspokenness about sexual relations and its reference to "a criminal operation" (ie abortion). The real reasons for the ban were, in all likelihood, political: the play casts a penetrating, deeply undeluded eye on the country's cynical inner circles of power. Using the author's 1926 rewrite (which updates the proceedings so as to bring in the new bargaining strengths of the union-backed Labour Party, references to Sinn Fein, etc), Hall calls the piece, "the most effective play about politicians since Shakespeare".

That's probably pushing it a bit (I can think of a longish list of rivals for that title headed by *Danton's Death*.) Barker's drama is certainly remarkable, though, for the acuteness with which it demonstrates two types of waste: that the idealist will always be disposable among men principally concerned with forging deals that help them cling to power; and that to be an idealist can involve the wastage of whole areas of a man's personal life.

Michael Pennington is excellent in the central role of Trebell, a maverick independent MP who wants to disestablish the Church of England and to devote the money released to the cause of a great new educational system. An eminently practical visionary, he has made getting his Bill on the Statute Book a condition for aligning with the Tories who, on the verge of regaining power, want to ditch the Opposition for years to come by stealing some of its programme. The hollow expediency of the party's commitment to Trebell and his plans is exposed when the married woman who was briefly his mistress, dies after a back-street abortion and the politician is threatened by scandal.

I've often complained that Pennington is a cerebral, chilly, unsexy actor, but these qualities are perfect for Trebell, a precise, cant-hating, clinical man who even seduces Felicity Kendal's overly arch Amy as if impatiently working through a committee agenda. The play brings him to a tragic sense of the cost of these politically valuable attributes and of placing all his capacity to love in a cause. This recognition is prompted partly by his being discarded by the Tories. The superb, darkly droll scene of a conclave at the home of Denis Quilley's urbanely cynical leader, dramatises the ironic, half-accidental circumstances of his being dropped. There's no problem from the wronged husband (Greg Hicks) who agrees to keep quiet, or from Trebell, who says that, if need be, he'll own up. The difficulties are hypocritically manufactured by an elderly, bumptious, unloved MP, as soon as he picks up the fact that one of his enemies in the party will resign if Trebell is ditched. A great programme of reform expires amidst pettiness and patch-ups.

It is also paternal feelings for his dead child that push Trebell towards suicide and, to give these weight, the play has (uncomfortably) to demonise Amy for her decision to abort. But that's not to doubt the genuinness of the hero's tragedy: discussing himself as if he were already posthumous, Pennington's Trebell retains, heartbreakingly now, the donnish, glacially smiling methodicality of manner that had masked the human waste.

To 26 April (0171-928 7616)

Paul Taylor

Voyage of discovery

CLASSICAL Stravinsky: BBCSO/ Andrew Davis; Matrix Ensemble *Royal Festival Hall; St John's, London*

The BBC's Stravinsky series *Rights of Spring* has treated us over the past 10 days to a feast of the composer's music, a lot of it unfamiliar. Two concerts by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, under the invigorating lead of Andrew Davis, ranged widely over his astonishingly varied output, while Robert Ziegler and the Matrix Ensemble explored, among other things, the Russian period that first brought Stravinsky to international prominence.

The startling journey which took the composer from youth to octogenerian mastery was dramatically illustrated in last Thursday's concert, where we heard the early Symphony in E flat, composed under the tutelage of his composition teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, immediately after the "Aldous Huxley Variations", that astonishingly compressed masterpiece from the 1960s. A friend once asked me how long I thought the Variations lasted. To his delight, I fell into the trap, and supposed about 12 minutes. They are, of course, under half that length, but Stravinsky's masterly concentration of structural means made it possible to suggest, as he would have put it, 12 minutes of felt time in five minutes of ontological, or real, time.

All of this was superbly suggested by Andrew Davis and the BBC players, although they only truly nailed the music's taxing details in a repeat performance, given, Davis told his audience, in order to prove the composer's point that the three exquisitely textured 12-part *Variations* make a different expressive effect each time we hear them. As for the symphony, exuberantly presented by Davis, there is little to mark except the extraordinary affinities both thematically and texturally with Glazunov's Fifth and Eighth Symphonies. In truth, despite its charm, there is hardly an original moment in this work, which is the more odd considering that *The Right of Spring* was only three years away.

The programme also included a sparkling performance of the Violin Concerto, with Kyoko Takezawa a bright but never brittle soloist, and Davis tautly in command. In fact, Davis seems particularly in tune with those neo-classical works that Boulez, for instance, another contributor to this concert series, has always dismissed. This was borne out by Davis's marvellous reading of *Persephone* the previous week. It was an interpretation that positively glowed, the chording in Stravinsky's exquisitely weighted textures breathtakingly poised. Wonderful singing by the BBC Symphony Chorus and New London Children's Choir, a beautifully judged commentary by Irène Jacob, and Donald Kaasch's accomplished tenor completed the picture. It was followed by a powerfully-intense *Oedipus Rex*, whose vastly different classical world was no less magisterially captured. Jon Garrison, Louise Winter and Alan Opie were outstanding soloists and Samuel West narrated with flair.

Which leaves the Matrix Ensemble's Sunday evening concert. It was notable for a lively rendering of that inimitable burlesque, *Renard*, beautiful singing by Susan Roberts and Mark Tucker in the *Cantata*, and a rare performance of the *Four Russian Peasant Songs* for ladies voices and four horns, exhilarating in its rustic verve.

The BBC Singers/ Matrix concert will be broadcast tomorrow, 9.45pm, on 'Choir Works', Radio 3

Anthony Payne

NEXT WEEK IN

THE INDEPENDENT

MONDAY

MEDIA+

Our 32-page section that takes on everything the press, television and advertisers throw at us. And asks why

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Our unbeatable section for everyone who educates, is being educated or cares

THE INDEPENDENT

IT IS...ARE YOU?

GERAINT LEWIS LAURIE LEWIS

REVIEW

	THE FILM The English Patient	THE PLAY Lady in the Dark	THE BALLET Dance Bites
overview	Writer-director Anthony Minghella's multi-Oscar nominated $30m screen version of Michael Ondaatje's Booker prizewinner is an epic love story starring Ralph Fiennes, Kristin Scott Thomas and Juliette Binoche, score by Gabriel Yared, edited by Walter Murch and produced by Saul Zaentz. *Cert 15, 165 mins, across the country*	The London premiere of the Moss Hart/ Kurt Weill/ Ira Gershwin show about glamorous Liza Elliott (Maria Friedman) seeking therapy to avoid cracking up. With Charlotte Cornwell and James Dreyfus. Designs by Adrianne Lobel and Nicky Gillibrand, directed by Francesca Zambello. *At the National Theatre, London (0171-928 2252)*	The Royal Ballet's brief tour of a six-part evening of works by new choreographers Cathy Marston, Tom Sapsford and Christopher Wheeldon and established names William Tuckett, Matthew Hart and Ashley Page, including the final performance by Adam Cooper, the star the company should never have let go. *The tour is over but some of the names will reappear.*
critical view	Adam Mars-Jones praised the "relentlessly beautiful" film. "Minghella's touch is so sure." "An intense epic, both sweeping and fiercely intimate... the film crackles with a palpable sexual charge," revelled the *Spectator*. "The performances are flawless, more surprising are the fluency, poetry and scale of Minghella's direction," said *Time Out*. "You can take your brain to *The English Patient* and you will not be insulted," approved *The Times*. "Ravishing," drooled *Arena*. "If Scott Thomas doesn't win an Oscar there's no justice. Same goes for the film," asserted *GQ*. "Falls short of greatness," carped the *Standard*.	Paul Taylor found it dated and the "obstinately unthrilling production does it few favours... Friedman is badly miscast". "Horrid costumes throughout... Zambello has directed the show in much the same way that Friedman performs the title role: as various kinds of artificiality... over-choreographed, trite, bogus," the *FT*. "Friedman is one of our finest musical-theatre talents but... she never comes close to moving you," shrugged *The Daily Telegraph*. "Friedman's stellar performance," saluted *The Guardian*. "The supporting cast is fine and Friedman more than fine," cooed *The Times*. "What are you waiting for?" cried the *Mail*.	Louise Levene was distinctly unimpressed. "If the Royal Ballet persists in such a low-key touring programme there is a very real danger that the nation's taxpayers will wonder what all the fuss is about." "We positively regretted we had wasted a whole evening on too much that was shoddy and worthless," thundered the *Sunday Telegraph*. "Too many eggs in one basket, not all of which hatch... generous in its courses, what it lacks is a main dish," worried *The Sunday Times*. "Opens most promisingly with a thoughtful work by Cathy Marston... It was left to Ashley Page to produce the most accomplished dance of the evening," declared *The Times*.
our view	Minghella's leap into the major league is almost unprecedented. Go.	Good score, hopeless design, helpless direction. Thank God for Charlotte Cornwell and James Dreyfus.?	Touring small-scale work is fine in theory but there was too much of too little merit.

KEY: EXCELLENT · GOOD · OK · POOR · DEADLY

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

People power

Wynton Marsalis has turned the hardships of slavery into sublime jazz. By Phil Johnson

A three-hour oratorio about the history of slavery where the audience comes out whistling the tunes has to count as some kind of a triumph. *Blood on the Fields* by Wynton Marsalis – who wrote both the music and the libretto, and who performs the work at the Barbican on Tuesday with his Lincoln Centre Jazz Orchestra and the three featured vocalists of John Hendricks, Miles Griffith and Cassandra Wilson – is an extraordinary achievement by any standards.

While the London concert is sold out, everyone will have a chance to hear it soon when the Sony CD of the piece is released. Though previously Marsalis's music has, despite his abundant gifts as a trumpet soloist, tended to err on the side of a rather dry classicism, *Blood on the Fields* is compellingly emotional. As Marsalis is a controversial figure in jazz, whose disdain for the avant-garde and for popular black music forms such as rap has earned him his share of enemies, this is his best defence yet. Indeed, it's a counter-punch that it may be difficult to recover from.

Dealing with the experience of American slavery from the middle passage to arrival in the New World, the work resounds with the whole history of jazz, from fabled field-calls and hollers, to gut-bucket New Orleans blues, ecstatic gospel ululation's, and the elegant, Ellingtonian measures of classic Harlem swing. The musical story doesn't stop there, of course, as the historical material is played from within a contemporary, post-modernist, idiom where the cool-school harmonies of Miles Davis and Gil Evans, and the splintered orchestral voicings of Charles Mingus provide much of the dominant colour.

Each of the three vocalists brings their own contribution too: John Hendricks – the veteran scat-singer – gets to do his thing in one mesmerising solo-feature that will surely stop the show; Cassandra Wilson, who is the most affecting female jazz singer since Billie Holiday, Betty Carter and Shirley Horn, adds her deep-voiced melancholy and incomparable country-blues feeling; while the gospel-trained Miles Griffith, on the face of it a less powerful singer than Hendricks or Wilson, supplies the necessary sense of balance through his deacon-like strength, as well as lending a suitably churchy vocal response to the calls of the orchestra's congregation of horns.

> ‘Slavery is people being stripped of their dignity’

The music of the 14-piece band is full of glorious, bravura effects that hark back to the earliest days of jazz, with Marsalis's own trumpet crowing, whinnying and barking in the opening number in a way that recalls the first-ever jazz recording by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band 80 years ago. With the orchestra built around several key personnel from Marsalis's own small groups, he has been able to write for particular instrumental voices, and thus use the expressive potential of the soloists to the full. Though the written score is complex and exacting, there's still plenty of room for improvisation.

"I always tell the musicians that they can do what they want with the music," Marsalis told me last week. "It's just an outline, but the voicings for when the horns are all playing together, those can't change. There's a lot of room for the rhythm section to improvise, and there's a lot of improvisation going on around that between the rest of the band. I know the personalities of the musicians, because with most of them I knew them when they were younger, and they came up with me."

If we could have expected Marsalis to get the music right, the accomplishment of the libretto is still something of a shock. Though Marsalis has written before, contributing a stylish, aphoristic and often witty text to the book *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, from 1994, where short essays or impressionistic sketches act as a complement to Frank Stewart's photographs, the poetry of some of the lines from *Blood on the Fields* rewards close attention.

"I think I hear a drum. I think I hear a drum / Playing proudly, pounding, saying softly, come" from Cassandra Wilson's opening song, gives an idea of the way he uses rhythm, and this is extended in the almost Brechtian device of having lines voiced in chorus by the orchestra to preface each movement, which Marsalis conducts as if they were musical phrases. His feeling for the poetic gesture and its place within a context of jazz performance is evident in *Sweet Swing Blues*, where he writes that: "Whenever somebody plays something good on our bandstand, we jokingly cup our hands together, reach down, scoop up the sound, and pour it all over our faces like we're bathing in it."

Blood on the Fields was premiered in New York, at Lincoln Centre's Alice Tully Hall, on 1 April, 1994. It was received with extravagant praise. A star since his first recording as a leader at the age of 19, Marsalis, now 35, has not produced anything so completely satisfying before, despite a number of attempts at extended forms.

Moreover, the history of the extended form in jazz has never been a particularly fruitful one. Apart from the suites of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, there has been little that sounds like more than a compilation of themes, perhaps as a result of the generally haphazard and under-funded nature of most jazz commissions. Of *Blood on the Fields*, Marsalis says that: "With something that long, it's always the form that's difficult. The problem is one of keeping the form together, and I had never done the words myself before. The story is one thing that makes it easy to keep it organised. I know how I want it to sound but it's difficult because it's so big. In mixing it for the album, the problem is the dynamics – what's loud and what's soft."

> ‘We scoop up the sound and pour it all over our faces’

That *Blood on the Fields* has proved so successful might be due to several things, though the presence of the vocalists and hence the need to write proper tunes is probably paramount. Certainly, the theme of slavery, and its inevitable contemporary resonance, is one that Marsalis feels deeply. Nor does he see any great sense of liberation in present-day American society. "Slavery is just the same social and political stuff as is organised today," he said. "It's people being stripped of their dignity and not given the opportunity to participate. Nowadays it's reflected in people being put in prison, in being subjected to misconceptions in the media, and in incorrect perceptions of groups of people."

Accordingly, *Blood on the Fields* offers no great messianic sense of release from bondage. The libretto ends on a note of cautious optimism, with the repeated refrain of the closing number, "Freedom's in the trying / Walk on through the door" preceding a last African imprecation from the chorus, and the band's final theme. The songs, though, are something else, especially when delivered by Hendricks and Wilson. They have such a wonderfully stubborn, indomitable feel to them that they really do bring a rare, authentically humanist sense of grandeur to the work. And if you can whistle that, there has to be hope somewhere.

'Blood on the Fields' is performed Tues. Barbican, London, EC2 (0171-638 8891), some tickets may be available on the day; the CD is released on Sony

Brian Friel: What's the question?

THEATRE Give Me Your Answer, Do
Abbey Theatre, Dublin

Something of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, Brian Friel's wambling new play, *Give Me Your Answer, Do*, is a curiously self-conscious piece about a bankrupt, elderly Irish art-novelist, Tom Connolly (Tom Hickey). Mystically prodded through a wine-drunk afternoon by his wife, Daisy (Catherine Byrne), he quixotically evades the issue of whether to sell his manuscripts – including personal, never published work– to the agent (Darragh Kelly) of a Texas university, or whether to face the nightmare of a blank page.

One wonders, after *Dancing at Lughnasa*, whether this is a dilemma that really ails Friel. What seems more at stake in this drifting, fragmented, self-indulgent script is the plight of a "serious" writer, fighting against the constraints of past success.

Opening and closing with the strangest and most unexplained shadow over all the proceedings – Connolly's mute daughter, Bridget (Pauline Hutton), a drooling, cross-eyed sanatorium patient receiving electroshock treatment for an unspecified "nervous" ailment – the play wallows in the bleak, dignity-crumbling effects of age on three inveterate couples: here converging on a Scrabble-and-alcohol afternoon on a sunlit lawn.

The Connollys, at the end of the day, emerge as the sanest of the lot. Daisy's parents are Jack (David Kelly), a dandified, pathetically kleptomaniac cocktail pianist; and Maggie (Aideen O'Kelly), a self-deluding, chair-bound, arthritic, retired doctor. Enter the over-the-top frivolity of Tom's best friend and chief rival – the *popular* novelist, Garret Fitzmaurice (Des McAleer) – and his acidly vivacious middle-class wife, Grainne (Frances Tomelty). Like all the women, her vivid button eyes constantly strip her husband of the least temporary arrogation of self-respect.

What emerges from the icily savage, glancing encounters is a cruel and depressing depiction of the ageing, upper-bohemian, Irish drinking classes. Friel's constant theme of post-colonial decay is heavily overstated in Frank Hallinan Flood's set. But there is something unbridled in Friel's portraits of dissembling rival-writers: despicable agent-creatures, talking "ugly money"; and, most crucially, the indolent parasitic wives – vicariously withering every inch of their husbands' ineffectual hopes.

Maybe it's meant as a pacan to their lot – but this is a deliberately inconclusive piece of writing; marooned somewhere between memory and confused contemporaneity. No matter how closely you follow the will-o'-the-wisp of Friel's substantial intelligence, it's very difficult to run the more disturbing elements to ground. And yet, the show delivers quite a number of emotional stabs – often preserved in a nostalgic waft of, say, Mendelssohn or Fats Waller.

Directed by Friel himself, this show has some serious *longueurs* and off-notes. It might have worked better with the interpretative counterpoint of another director, but Friel's fetishistic attention to his own text does worm its way uncomfortably into some private recess of your mind.

Mic Moroney

I want to be a clone

Hollywood's duplication complex started long before Dolly skipped into view, says John Lyttle

From the column inches devoted to Dolly the sheep, you'd think that until now no one had ever considered "the commercial, moral and cultural implications of cloning". Ah, Hollywood has. As befits a system geared to getting the public to swallow *Die Hard*, *Die Hard 2* and *Die Hard with a Vengeance*; the same goddamn story three times in a row. Indeed, cloning is the perfect metaphor for contemporary Hollywood itself, hence its nigh-obsessive interest in the pros and cons of duplication.

Not that cloning proper has ever quite paid off at the box office. As Joe Roth, head of Disney Studios, recently opined: "I've never read a cloning script that I wanted to make." But that was before the world said hello Dolly. Now the industry is looking to the summer release of *Alien 4: Resurrection* in which Sigourney Weaver, disposed of in a vat of molten metal in *Alien³*, is regenerated from a single rescued skin cell and then separated from the monster embryo she carried in the preceding picture. Advance word suggests that, in keeping with President Clinton's hand wringing, *Alien 4* highlights what was submerged in *Alien³*: the erosion of women's reproductive rights. What price motherhood – even to a monster – when the shadows in white coats have made it quicker by tube? As *Alien³* predicted, the issue is control. So small wonder the hills of Beverly are alive with the sound of once discarded scripts being dusted off. Here comes a thriller about nurse who finds that a mysterious "new" patient is actually herself – her future self, sent to replace her, as the robot Maria usurps the place of the real Maria in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926). Talk about an identity crisis.

Tapping into the *Zeitgeist* is what Hollywood does best. As is covering all the angles. As the prophetic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) suggests, even "dehumanisation" is in the eye of the beholder. Invasion has been declared dystopian, because for the *Homo sapiens* "original", doubling-up turns out to be a form of death: the self is not complimented, but *displaced*. (A notion lifted from twin movies – in *The Dark Mirror* and *A Stolen Life*, someone has got to go.) The surface remains the same, but the spark that makes you (supposedly) unique is gone – an indulgence Dr Pretorious, playing God, archly dismisses in *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), that early venture into reproduction without sex: "The soul. Can you touch it, smell it?". One imaginès many of today's scientific community, in the face of hype and hostility, bursting to quote him, but not daring. Those aid grants, you see.

As the pod people, and Pretorious, with his miniature beings, imply, it's not so much our vaunted spirituality that is offended but our vanity. The imitation of life, on the other hand, views itself as an "advance", an "improvement". Except it's science, not nature, taking the next evolutionary step, a message the Michael Keaton comedy *Multiplicity* (1996) also subliminally peddles. Adjusting to the stress of contemporary living is what forces Keaton to split into four to cope with work and home, though the cautionary message is that his copy-cats turn out coarser, camper, dumber and, worse, believe they deserve autonomy – that they are individuals too.

It's a fair copy, guv: Fritz Lang's 'Metropolis' (1926); 'Invasion of the Bodysnatchers' (1956)

Recognition is what the replicants of *Blade Runner* (1982) also crave. Cue the slave force scenario beloved of the Left, and watch the clones rebel to demand basic civil rights: rights that must be denied so the idea and ideal of "human" individuality can pass muster. Arguments dismissed as sci-fi piffle then but that in recent weeks have reconstituted as lofty editorial.

These are not questions that overly trouble the men of Stepford, who routinely murder their flesh and blood wives in favour of identical, but wholly passive partners. *The Stepford Wives* (1975) is less about acting the Deity and – here we circle back to Sigourney and Doc Frankenstein – more about men stealing the role of mother. This theme is explicit in the same year's *Embryo*, in which Rock Hudson's foetal experimentation is revealed to be a selfish quest for the perfect woman: malleable, in other words. One notes that male knock-offs – see Atomic Man, taken from a single strand of Clark Kent's hair in *Superman 4*, or the "evil" Superman who emerges from the hero in *Superman 3* – tend to have minds, and plans, of their own, "bad" though they might be. Apparently, cloning doesn't tip the "natural" gender balance, but instead reinforces it – not evolutionary but reactionary.

Perhaps *Alien 4* will rectify that, as the recent TV movie, *The Stepford Husbands*, attempts to. Tables turned, the male is artificially bred to give satisfaction the old model can't: Brave New Man. But, as one doubtful character warns, every life begins pure – or, at least, pretty vacant, only to be corrupted by a thousand outside forces. In other words, biology isn't destiny. Experience is. A truism both commercial celluloid and vapourish fourth estate stubbornly fail to address, with the sole, and wholly surprising exception of *The Boys of Brazil*, a film that blithely allows 94 pubescent Hitlers to go their own way, confident that nurture, social circumstance and fate's fickle ways have as much to do with what makes us what we are as the DNA helix, cloned or otherwise. Merchants of doom and scriptwriters stuck for an ideas, please be advised.

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Screen-age children of chaos

Pat Kane surfs in from cyberspace to explain the digital revolution

PHOTOMONTAGE: JONATHAN ANSELL

It's almost become normal, this *place called cyberspace*. Morning radio presenters reluctantly mumble "at-something-dot-co" for their listeners' correspondence. After-hour pub conversations, white collars askew, begin like this: "Christ, I had 40 e-mails today." Cybercafés pop up in the dreariest backwater high streets while net terminals quietly appear in public libraries and the homes of relatives. My *mother-in-law* bought a Pentium PC with her retirement money a few months ago. Like the Walkman, video and camcorder, the Internet looks like another of those world-shattering technologies that becomes slowly normalised by the muffled textures of British life.

So it's perhaps not the best moment for these three examples of American cyber-evangelism to *hit our shores. The small but sig*nificant cloud raining on their parade is the recent collapse of the UK edition of *Wired* magazine. Despite the high numbers of computer enthusiasts in this country, there was no real market for *Wired*'s Californian ideology about "the digital revolution" – nor also, perhaps, for its aggressively free-market politics. Given the opposition parties' *joint commitment to a* national information infrastructure, what seems more likely in Britain is a digital reformation – the Internet and its uses seeping into the cracks and pores of everyday institutions (the school, the hospi*tal, the office), helping to lubricate* a social cohesion that already exists.

When reading these books, however, a niggling question arises. If the British manage to make cyberspace boring, will we miss out on the Revolution? In **Children of Chaos** (HarperCollins, £12.99), Douglas Rushkoff is already out there on the barricades, arguing that a whole new planetary consciousness is being created by Nintendo kids and Japanimation fans. Donna Haraway pushes the boat out even further in **Modest Witness @ Second Millennium** (Routledge, £14.99), arguing for a feminist politics which sees no boundaries between computers and their users, human and non-human. Even John Seabrook – *a New Yorker writer*, whose **Deeper: a two-year odyssey in cyberspace** (Faber, £12.99) is reassuringly bumbling – began his online journey thinking that "politics, ethics, and metaphysics – all the great disciplines of mankind – are ... yours to make again".

Deeper ends with Seabrook's computer making unstoppable fart noises during a crucial meeting with the *New Yorker editorial team* – which should alert you to the book's intentions. This is cyberspace as an extended episode of *Friends*, the dalliance of a talented young professional with the latest lifestyle option. Seabrook mixes wise-cracking and soul-searching in equal measure. Quill-pen British readers will also enjoy his brahmin background. While browsing *through an on-line archive, he is* reminded of "walking through the Princeton boathouse in the dim light after crew practice". Trying to account for the compulsiveness of net-surfing, he quotes a line from Eliot's *Four Quartets* – "distracted from distraction by distraction".

Where Seabrook renders the Net as extended conviviality, Douglas Rushkoff sees it as only *one sign of a completely new civil*isation. *Children of Chaos* refers to what Rushkoff calls the "screenagers" – those 12- to 25-year-olds in Britain and America whose consciousness is built from MTV, SuperMario, retro televi*sion, the joysticks and mouse-clicks* of cyber-tech. Although his book sometimes reads as if dictated from under a virtual reality helmet, Rushkoff is to be commended for trying to link chaos theory and cultural critique so lucidly. When so much science is now invoked to limit our options – Darwinist psychology and sexual neurology being two recent culprits – it's a change to read something that emphasises play and creativity as a norm of human nature.

But Rushkoff embarrasses as much as he enlightens. The brilliant counter-intuitive readings of street culture that might work across a *producer's table* (Rushkoff "develops content for TV and the Internet", wouldn't you know) sometimes don't quite stretch to grown-up subjects. Bosnia's bloodbath, for example, tests the author's faith in the positive evolution of human culture. "If you take a goldfish that has been kept in a tiny bowl and release him into a lake," Rushkoff helpfully adds, "he will swim in tiny circles for quite a while before he realises he has more room." The goldfish, in case you don't get the analogy, is Bosnia.

Donna Haraway would probably *regard the goldfish as a non-human* ally in the struggle against piscean incarceration. Rarely has the much-maligned subject of cultural studies produced such a case for the prosecution. Her bizarrely titled *Modest Witness@Second Millennium: Female Man (c)_Meets Onco-Mouse(tm)* has one extraordinary *premise, hammered through its* appallingly written slabs of interdisciplinary babble. In the age of genetics and informatics, everything – whether human or non-human, organic or inorganic – is a political agent, and should be treated as such.

You don't believe me? Here we go: "Any interesting being in technoscience," writes Haraway, "such as a textbook, molecule, equation, mouse, pipette, bomb, fungus, technician, agitator, or scientist, can – and often should – be teased open, to show the sticky economic, technical, political, organic, *historical, mythic, and textual* threads that make up its tissues." Bonkers? Possibly.

What's irritating about this book is that there was never a greater need for an articulate critique of science, at a time when we are more than ever (in one of Haraway's happier phrases) "bodies of data". But *how do you begin to grapple with* the expanded range of human choices that digital technology and bioscience now offer if the guidebooks are as useless and hermetic as this?

Perhaps the difference between *cyber-cultures across the Atlantic* lies in our lack of a frontier mentality. Our national dream is not the American one – that of unlimited space traversed by sovereign individuals, improvising their society into being, using technology (whether gun or modem) to exploit the wilderness (whether *natural, or digital*). *To his credit*, Seabrook keeps making this connection – to his own parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, all hucksters and grafters in the grand tradition of American blue-sky enterprise.

No *matter* how pro-entrepreneurial the British parties of business claim to be, they will never infuse the next century with the same Whitmanesque fervour. They will sing the body electric; we'll curse the bloody electrics. Which is probably as it should be.

A week in books

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

In December 1995, two school exercise books filled with a childish scrawl arrived on the desk of Olivier Orban, editorial director at the French publishers Plon. The manuscript came via a lawyer and purported to be the journal of a teenager called "Chimo". He presented himself as a 19-year-old *beur* (second-generation French Arab) who lived on a sink estate in the Paris outer suburbs: the rundown *banlieue* at the end of the Metro lines.

Published last spring, *Lila Dit Ca* titillated and scandalised literary Paris with its tale of a 16-year-old streetwise blonde. This "angel with the mouth of a whore" spins erotic fantasies for her young swain as an escape from the "chaos and misery" of their surroundings. The book proved to be a runaway bestseller; foreign rights *went for a vast sum*, and David Watson's fine translation will appear from Fourth Estate next week as *Lila Says* (£9.99).

Now, the French love bookish mysteries and hoaxes; and they have plenty of previous when it comes to concocting them. In 1975, the novelist Romain Gary *won the Prix Goncourt* under the mask of "Emile Ajar". And when it comes to anonymous literary porn, remember that the authorship of *The Story of O* fuelled salon chatter for decades. (It was in fact written by Dominique Aury, a distinguished – and far from masochistic – publisher who attended board meetings at Gallimard well into her eighties).

Fans of the French blend of *erotica and exotica that dates* back at least to Flaubert's *Salammbô* will enjoy *Lila Says*. Yet it sounds to me about as genuine as a 25 franc note. A touch of *Carmen*: a hint of *La Traviata*, not to mention all those 19th-century tarts called Lola: mix those flavours with French curiosity about the mysterious East in their own backyard and a smidgeon of the social conscience evident in Mathieu Kassovitz's film *La Haine* (a much more credible work), and you have the recipe.

Behind this cunning package, you can almost smell the Gitanes of some middle-aged Left Bank intellectual and taste his late-night inspirational Scotch (Chivas Regal or Black Label, if I know the type). In a typically improbable allusion, "Chimo" even nods to his own cultural pedigree. He talks of the short journey taken by the slumming *bourgeois* who come to the suburbs for cheap sex and stolen goods as "this trip to the Orient, this dip into the *secret world of the harem*". If the author truly turns out to be a badly-educated young *beur* from the high-rise wilderness, I shall happily treat the team at Plon to the best *couscous royale* in town.

Intrigued readers may reply: so what? All talented writers mimic distant voices and imagine lives far from *their own. True, but the* chances of a real kid with a passion for the written word emerging from the semi-ghettoes into the Parisian limelight remain as slim as ever. For more than a *decade*, one in seven French voters has backed Europe's most successful Fascist party, the *Front National*. Governments have responded with a string of clampdowns and round-ups intended to bully the genuine Chimos into silence. Whatever Lila and *her potes may want to say*, the French state and its *flics* still answer with a curt "shut up and get back in your box".

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Bowled over and out

Tibor Fischer's new novel is an empty vessel, writes Simon Louvish

Tibor Fischer: 'naff characters'

The Collector Collector *by Tibor Fischer, Secker, £12.99*

Being reviewed is a lucky dip for an author. One person's opinion is transmitted as a general cachet or black mark. In the past, Tibor Fischer has attracted the plaudits of such luminaries as Salman Rushdie, John Updike and A S Byatt. This time he's got me. Tough.

This preamble done, I can no longer delay my reluctant response to a fellow author: this book is truly terrible. Fischer's first novel, *Under the Frog*, was a justly acclaimed tragicomic vision of the Hungary of his parents' generation, a place of young men twisting in the gyre of an idiotic regime, culminating in the romantic and ill-fated rebellion of 1956. "As a Hungarian," a friend tells the hero of that book, Gyuri Fischer, "you should be prepared for the odd cataclysm."

His second book, *The Thought Gang*, shifted this cataclysmic and anarchic vision into a contemporary tale of a philosopher who prefers bank robbery to academia. At one point, a friend *of the protagonist suggests he* would be at his best if he was sent back to the era of the Greeks, whence he could "communicate to us via red figure Attic vases."

In *The Collector Collector*, this is precisely what happens. The *protagonist*, a Sumerian bowl, has been passed down over the ages, the perfect epitome of the "been it, seen it" syndrome. A great opportunity, you might think, to ruminate on the eternal foibles and follies of humanity.

But what happens? The eponymous bowl, in keeping with its sly origin as boozy philosopher Eddie Coffin of *The Thought Gang*, spends the bulk of the book involved with two stereotyped women. Rosa, the art expert, longs for a good man to love but keeps dating nerds and creeps; Nikki, a sluttish ex-prostitute, drops her knickers at the slightest pretext and does her best to destroy Rosa's life. Instead of eternal wisdom, the *bowl appears to represent a kind* of English football-hooligan laddishness, despite its detours into tales of past human inanities.

A Tiborian thought: Why are all the people who own a Sumerian bowl, through the centuries, *such outright dickheads?* At certain moments a coherent grotesquerie emerges, as when the bowl reflects, on eating, that "every creature on the planet is trying to persuade the rest of the planet into its stomach."

This *is the Tiborian universe*: a world of unmitigated exploitation, stupidity and mindless violence. The rot set in in *The Thought Gang*, which depended on the reader accepting that inflicting pain can be inherently funny. But that book had chutzpah, genuinely surreal moments, a proper zing and many other words beginning with Z. This one has a succession of naff characters, unbelievable events and an obsession with dicks, tits and various euphemisms for sex which might appear hilarious in a bar at one-thirty am.

I have no doubt at all that Tibor Fischer can write, conjure with words, play with language, make you turn the page. The question is, to what purpose? In *Under the Frog*, he wrote about things that mattered deeply: youth, desires, dreams and their destruction under the treads of tanks. He is not the first, nor the last author to fetishise violence *in lieu of any other outlet for the* expression of the malaise of our times – a deep-seated loss of faith in any values untainted by hypocrisy, selfishness and omnivorous greed. I just think it's *zhlubish*. Bring on the Thought without the Gangs.

When Pythagoras took off his skirt

The culture of physics is infested with blokeish fantasies, says Jenny Turner

Pythagoras' Trousers: God, physics and the gender wars *by Margaret Wertheim, Fourth Estate, £9.99*

The Old Testament we've known for ages. The new one, we've had for close on 2,000 years. But what about the Very New Testament, revealed in 1993? "And the Lord came down to see the accelerator which the children of men builded ... And the Lord sighed, and said, *Go* to it, let us go down and there give them the God particle, so that they may see how beautiful is the universe I have made ..." I particularly like that "go to it". Quite an improvement on old King James.

The God Particle is the name of a book by the US astrophysicist Leon Lederman. "Essentially a long argument for why America should fund the now defunct $10bn Superconductor Supercollider," says Margaret Wertheim, the book also contained "the unmistakable implication ... that particle physics is a direct path to the Deity". Hence the Very New Testament episodes, inserted in *Celestine Prophecy* fashion here and there in the text.

"It is not at all clear whether Lederman's theologising comes from a genuine religious faith, or scientific hubris," writes Wertheim, "or just a desire to sell books." But doesn't it look as if Lederman, whether in a fun or a cynical spirit, has just decided to try his hand at writing junk?

Margaret Wertheim is an Australian science journalist who works in the US. This book's argument, as she presents it in her introduction, is elegant and compelling. From Copernicus to Stephen Hawking, there has seldom been a famous physicist who did not pepper his formulae with references to "God". But scientists aren't supposed to be religious. Are all these physicists secret mystics at heart?

At the *same time*, physics is of all vocations (with the exception of the Catholic clergy) the one that has been most hostile to women. Ergo, the culture of physics is patriarchal and priestly. It excludes half the human race, on irrational grounds.

The story begins with Pythagoras of Samos (of the famous theorem), apparently one of the first Greeks to start wearing trousers instead of the more usual skirt. Pythagoras first started thinking about the universe in terms of fundamental mathematical relationships: odd and even, squares and triangles, structure and event. He also invested *numerical relationships* with emotional and cosmic significance: 216, for example, the "psychogonic cube" of 6 x 6 x 6. And he may have allowed the odd woman to join his inner circle, although they would have been at a bit of a disadvantage as, *in his system, femininity* = odd numbers = bad.

The story goes on with Copernicus and Kepler, Galileo and Bacon, Einstein and the quantum-mechanical cats. The basic structure of Wertheim's book is the traditional pageant-through-history: ancients, middle ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, modern times. Within that, we get pocket *biographies of all the* big male prime movers. These are followed by shorter, feminist-apologetic sketches of the women, from Hypatia on, who might have been prime movers, too, if the men had let them. The argument quickly loses its dynamism and so, very *noticeably*, does the prose. The sophisticated "cultural history" of physics we were promised never really turns up.

Most disappointingly, Wertheim's book completely loses sight of its most interesting goal: a natural his*tory, as it were*, of how physics through the ages has been motivated by fantasies about universal mastery and God. Instead, it attempts to make complex points about how sexism, religiosity and social irresponsibility feed into one another (as they obviously do on some level), but in an unhelpfully simplistic way.

For example, there is something deeply blokeish about Lederman with his God Particle fantasies and his ginormous Supercollider. But how could physics possibly not be infested with blokeish will-to-power fantasies, given the world we live in and the past it has had? That's just our basic reality, as *all-pervasive as the* air we breathe. No amount of weak-feminist if-only-ing is going to change that.

At one point, Wertheim cites admiringly the work of a woman biologist who won her Nobel prize, apparently, for, uh, "listening" to her *plants. If only they'd had a women's* room at Los Alamos. They could have sat around "listening" to their little lumps of plutonium, and spared humanity the trouble of the atom bomb ... That's a cheap stroke, of course. I know that Wertheim doesn't intend such a fatuous comparison. But the trouble with this sort of history is that's exactly what happens when such a work falls *into the* wrong hands.

The woman biologist deserves better, as do women in general. And so, pre-eminently, does the history of physics, both in its patriarchal, cultish aspects and in the nobility of its *endeavours ever since that founding* moment when, for the first time in western history, Pythagoras took off his skirt.

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

Behind the façade

Edith Sitwell's literary archive reveals a generous, eccentric life, writes Diana Souhami

Selected Letters of Edith Sitwell *edited by Richard Greene, Virago, £20*

When she was 17, Edith Sitwell was sent to pawn her mother's false teeth. She got 10/5d for them. Whisky (it was 1904) was 12/6d a bottle. Her mother, Lady Ida Sitwell, had a drink habit and uncertain morals and in 1915 spent three months in Holloway for fraud. Sir George Reresby Sitwell, MP, historian, tyrant and Edith's father, owned 6,000 acres and the family estate Renishaw, near Chesterfield, where Edith and her brothers Osbert and Sacheverell endured childhood.

"I don't believe there is another family in England who have had parents like ours," Edith wrote to Osbert. "Please see to it that I am cremated. The other thing would be too like living with father." They called him Ginger, the Red Death, the old beast and the old horror. Edith said he spent his life dodging the taxman. She and her brothers suspected he was finally murdered by a banker called Woog who embezzled their inheritance.

She said her "nervous system was ruined for life" before she was ten. Such comfort as there was came from her governess Helen Rootham, and as adults they lived together in a London flat. She resisted visiting Renishaw "in case they get a grip on me again". When Helen got cancer, Edith's letters to and about her were full of despair and generosity.

In 1970 the previous editor of Edith Sitwell's letters, John Lehmann, was not permitted to include any to her mother, father or brothers. It was a fatal omission. Her formidable parents and her love of her brothers – their shared horror of "the Gingers", their praise for one another and their mutual protectiveness – were at the root of her identity as a woman and poet. They are all dead now and their executor, Francis Sitwell, Sacheverell's son, has given permission for her letters to family to be published.

Most letters in this volume are at the Harry Ransom Research Centre in Texas. Mr Ransom's oil money has purchased swathes of Britain's literary heritage. Documents are kept in sub-zero conditions to prolong life. Visiting readers are vetted; special gloves supplied.

No corresponding discipline has been given to packaging this volume. A rogue quotation mark in the first paragraph points to hard work for the reader. The editor, Richard Greene, a Canadian academic, was an archivist for Edith Sitwell's literary estate. He has sifted thousands of letters. His choice is informed and wide ranging. Dramas are buried here, but effort is needed to unearth them.

Concepts and events – generosity, naïvety, love, money, fame, sickness – have to be mined. Notes are crammed as end pages and I got tired of rifling back and forth. Companion volumes are needed to make contextual sense: Osbert Sitwell's memoir, *Left Hand, Right Hand!* and Victoria Glendinning's biography, *A Unicorn Among Lions*.

It is a pity that there are no pictures. Edith's Elizabethan stature, with beringed hands and turbaned head, matched the grandness of Renishaw and belied her vulnerability. Cecil Beaton's photographs captured her. There are letters to him of praise and affection. The Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchew, with whom she fell in love, did a portrait which made her look like a dismal doge. Most of his letters are omitted. They met at a lunch given by Gertrude Stein and Alice B Toklas in 1927. Edith was 40; Tchelitchew, 29. Their correspondence is sealed at the Yale University Library until 2000. Alice B Toklas said "Edith will go over for the breaking of the seals".

A few letters have escaped this embargo. They show Edith's naïvety and hurt. She admired his paintings, gave him money, encouraged others to buy his work. But Tchelitchew – in love with a pianist, Alan Tanner – attacked her as an artist, told her he wanted to slap her face, have her kneel at his feet. "Russians only really like idiots, prostitutes and dressmakers," she wrote.

Edith thought herself the *doyenne* of modernism. Her audience she called "small and discerning" and she was hurt by criticism. Not all tolerated her incantatory style. A diary entry of Una Troubridge, Radclyffe Hall's partner, in 1924 was of "a bedlam afternoon with Edith Sitwell shouting down a megaphone" at the Poetry Society. At a hostile reception, Edith felt like a vast bird that had blundered into a room, hitting its head on the ceiling. She called critics of Gertrude Stein's "hermetic" writing "vulgar little clothes moths". Her letters to Stein are full of praise.

She was effusive to women writers whose work she enjoyed. On reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, she wrote to Carson McCullers: "What a great poet's mind and eye and senses you have." About a poem by HD (Hilda Doolittle) she wrote, "Yours is the supreme apple tree, the flowering apple". And she was warm with gratitude to HD's wealthy lover, Bryher (Winifred Ellerman).

She sent letters about whatever was on her mind. To the editor of the *Daily Mail* she railed at the "unceasing barking of dogs" at night. To Stanley Kauffman, editor of Ballantine Books, she gave convoluted apology for cutting him off when he phoned; she thought he was a journalist hounding her about giving a lunch party for Marilyn Monroe. And days before she died, the *Times Literary Supplement* published her outburst about cruelty to ponies in Belgian slaughter houses. These letters range wide, pointers to a creative, eccentric, generous life.

Edith Sitwell: painted by Pavel Tchelitchew to resemble 'a dismal doge' BRIDGEMAN – ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Painting pictures on land and sea

Carol Rumens enjoys some poetic notes from the margins

Salt Water *by Andrew Motion, Faber, £7.99,*
A Painted Field *by Robin Robertson, Picador, £6.99*

Although both authors were born in the early-to-mid 1950s, these two poetry collections spring from widely different positions on the career-graph. Robin Robertson's book is his first, and if it seems a belated debut for a literary professional, perhaps Robertson's own experience as a publisher has taught him the virtue of caution. Not surprisingly, the poems are carefully crafted, but the manner is tense and alert, his technique never slick.

Andrew Motion, on the other hand, seems at his most relaxed in this, his eighth collection. The poet seems enough at ease with himself and the limits of his genre to enjoy the sense of mastery. His earliest influences were the so-called war poets: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Edward Thomas. And sometimes it has seemed that Motion's own quest has been to shape himself into their late-20th century equivalent – an English war-poet without a war, but with access to plentiful imagery of death and disaster, as well as a richer vein of painful personal memories.

Motion's desire to push poetry beyond the lyric boundaries he inhabited comfortably in his first book, *The Pleasure Steamers*, led him to the extended narrative sequence, a genre he has virtually made his own. But sometimes the writing itself could become something of a battlefield. The sequence "Joe Soap", for instance, which dominated his last collection, combined elements of the murder-mystery and war-story with excursions into a kind of magic realism.

> ❛Andrew Motion sailed as a passenger on the same route that took the dying Keats to Rome❜

Motion has worked hard to make prose and poetry pull together, perhaps wishing to synthesise his varied talents – as poet, novelist and biographer. The experiments have never been less than interesting, but there's a lot to recommend in *Salt Water*'s rediscovery of more concentrated narrative and lyric forms. In spite of the odd Larkinesque splash of acid petulance, the overriding impression is of poems able to be "surprised by joy" (sometimes in animal form) and to celebrate imaginative fecundity: "Retriever-dog winds/in a clear track/raced forwards and backward laying a new idea at his feet/again and again." ("Goethe in the Park").

Even with his "negative capability" refreshed, Motion has not abandoned all major construction work. Thematically linked by water, his three sequences are like a sea on which the individual poems bob as confidently as well-made boats. "Fresh Water" and "Salt Water" are composed entirely in verse, which may be why they are more fluent, brisk and compact than usual. "Sailing to Italy" is largely in prose (though the occasional poem sends up a fragile shoot) and, again, there's the pleasant sense of a medium allowed to do what it does best.

Motion sailed as a passenger on the same route that took the dying Keats to Rome. Perhaps there's something faintly stunt-ish about the whole idea: a biographer shouldn't need to live part of his subject's life. Mystical hints that the author is seeking to "meet" Keats are a shade tiresome. But overall, this is travelogue with the vividness of the best kind of letter-writing (such as Keats's own). It immerses us in physical reality, showing us the ropes and oilskins and winches, the gales and engine-failure, as well as psychological effects – particularly the tantalising failure (typical of those whose art is to stay the moment) to inhabit the happiness of the present.

Robin Robertson gives an occasional nod towards Heaney ("Enter the tore of trench and rampart") and to Tom Paulin ("Sunlight glints/like mica schist in granite"). But the writer to whom he seems closest, sharing something of the tough-lyric mode and lively visual imagination, is Norman MacCaig. Even when working in a largish structure – such as his Ovid imitation "The Flaying of Marsyas" – he achieves narrative progress mostly by cutting from image to image. The effect is of a disquietingly obsessive, jackal-like circling of the flayed torso – a cinematic detachment as various metaphors are tried like different camera angles.

Robertson uses a collage technique in his sequence "Camera Obscura", which tells the tragic story of the Edinburgh photographer and failed painter, David Octavius Hill. It inter-cuts imagined diary and letter extracts with snatches of folk-song, haiku-like *apercus*, love-poems (haunting, if a little unfocused) and sharp-eyed documentary that finds humour as well as dolour in Edinburgh now: "The Japanese tourist places his camera on a post,/backs away, and stands,/smiling vigorously. The small machine flashes: clicks./I hear the shutter's/granular slither/as a spade in wet soil,/while he would hear: sha'shin."

As these lines suggest, Robertson has an ear as good as his eye. There is rich consonantal and alliterative music to be heard throughout *A Painted Field*. While not uninterested in matters of national identity, as the sequence reveals, Robertson registers his own identity most tellingly through his poems' aural patterning.

His poems are not cries from margins – if we mean regional margins – and only occasionally satirical (see "Sunny Memories"). But the fact that Robertson is not writing in the "deafening silence" which obtained for MacCaig's generation (the phrase was used by Ian Crichton Smith, as recently as 1988) has no doubt helped secure the work's unusual poise, the courage of its personal obsessions.

Voluptuary and pervert dies the death of a dog

Evelyn Nesbit: 'seduced' PHOTOGRAPH: CORBIS-BETTMANN/UPI

Peter Parker is intrigued by a scandalous family history

The Architect of Desire *by Suzannah Lessard, Weidenfeld, £18.99*

Suzannah Lessard's great-grandfather, Stanford White, was the most flamboyant partner of McKim, Mead and White, architects to the plutocracy during New York's "Gilded Age". A figure of boundless energy and appetites, White lived in enormous style and ran up even more enormous debts. By 1906 his health and finances were equally depleted, and although only 53, he would probably have died soon of natural causes had not a millionaire called Harry K Thaw shot him dead at Madison Square Garden, a building White designed. Thaw announced he was avenging his wife, a young woman called Evelyn Nesbit who as a 16-year-old had been drugged and seduced by the architect. *Vanity Fair* reported the case under the headline: "Stanford White, Voluptuary and Pervert, Dies the Death of a Dog".

Lessard grew up on the family estate designed by White on Long Island, so that although his name was rarely mentioned his presence was always felt. "In the beautiful environment of the family past," she writes, "there was a magnificent figure who had gone out of control in a way destructive to those on his course – including his family – and ultimately to himself. Behind my memories of a blissful childhood in a beautiful place, there were also destructive forces that were blind and out of control, but unacknowledged. Yet to this inner truth and all its ramifications I had no access. This was the great role of family history to me."

This is family history as catharsis. Lessard has a fascinating story to tell, and at times she does this with great skill, notably in the chapter about "The Astor Orphans", an engagingly batty clutch of aunts and uncles. If the whole book had been written with this stylish clarity it would deserve the accolades heaped upon it in America, but a sentence beginning "When I became literary ..." unwittingly signals what has gone wrong.

What becoming literary means is demonstrated by the subsequent passage, in which Lessard describes the moment in her thirties when she suddenly became aware of her beloved grandmother's mortality: "I began to harvest her presence as though it were a field of flax, and I were gathering it into baskets, retting it, combing it, spinning it, and weaving it, until I felt I had something I could hold, and take away with me, like the pillow that I was embroidering. There was safety for me within the atmosphere of serene crashing. I found grounding in that dizzying environment of orbiting things: it was safe, but it wasn't, but it was. But it was." Lessard frequently elaborates images and ideas into this sort of incantatory muzziness.

Her ingenious notion of relating Stanford White's architecture to his moral character is similarly spoiled by overemphasis. His remodelling of a sham Norman castle involved extensive use of "lush pink marble", a material of which Lessard became uncomfortably aware when she attended the Catholic woman's college which subsequently occupied the building. The marble "embarrassed" the students, she claims, "because it was so unrestrainedly sensuous, so soft-seeming, with an alternately swirling and mottled grain". The "voluptuary pink" of this "quasi-bordello environment" may have seemed inappropriate for nuns, but then White had designed it not for a religious order but a newspaper editor.

Lessard suggests that White's buildings "seduce", "ensnare", are "powerfully sensual": "Behind the aesthetic sophistication of a Stanford White interior is the blindly voracious, irresponsible force, both personal and that of a whole class, a whole nation out of control." You could equally well stand inside one of his buildings and primarily be aware of order and proportion. It depends what you are looking for.

Lessard reveals that she was repeatedly fondled by an uncle and that she and her sisters were molested by her father, while another family member was raped by a cousin during a party. She contends that this incidence of sexual irregularity is somehow related to Stanford White's compulsive preying on under-age women. But her father, after all, was not a White descendant, but had married into the family.

The book ends with an unusual "moment of grace", when the family silence is breached during what amounts to a group-therapy session at which Lessard and her sisters confront the past and achieve adulthood.

Mirabella magazine, to which the author is a contributing editor, said of this book that it is "so crushingly elegant that the act of reading was like running your cheek across a velvet nap". Anyone who recognises a distinction between literature and a party-frock will be less easily impressed.

'A gripping saga of great passion ... sustained, impassioned and uplifting'
THE TIMES

His bestselling novel of the Dark Ages
NOW IN PAPERBACK
SCEPTRE
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Paperbacks

By Christopher Hirst

Writing Home by Alan Bennett (Faber, £6.99) Now in a nice, chunky format, with a cheerful, crayoned self-portrait on the cover, this edition of Bennett's best-seller has been expanded to include diary selections from 1991 to 1995 and an introduction to *The Madness of George III* (Bennett describes the crumbling of his qualms about historical inaccuracy in the film script. "By the third draft I would have taken the King to Blackpool if I had thought it would have helped"). The book stands up wonderfully well – always perceptive, often very funny, occasionally shocking. As Mr B remarks of Russell Harty: "He had learned ... there was nothing that could not be said and no one to whom one could not say it." Reading Bennett's bits and bobs is a pure joy.

Real China by John Gittings (Pocket Books, £7.99) Despite its sensational sub-title, "From Cannibalism to Karaoke", this is an insightful and learned survey of "Middle China" – the backwaters scarcely touched by Deng's economic revolution.

In the "heavily disadvantaged" Guangxi province, Gittings alleges that an outbreak of cannibalism took place during the Cultural Revolution prompted both by revenge and a belief in "the therapeutic value of certain parts of the human body".

On the karaoke side, he reveals that 30 old songs praising Mao have recently been re-released and "set to a disco beat". Dismissing Deng's ambition to transform Middle China into a mainland Hong Kong, Gittings bleakly predicts that this region is likely to become another Third World country "on a vastly larger scale".

The Lost Victory by Correlli Barnett (Pan, £8.99) This is history with a passion. The case which Barnett makes against the 1945 Labour administration is hard to answer. He claims that in refusing to face up to Britain's diminished status, the Attlee cabinet frittered away the fruits of victory. Despite our "impoverished, obsolescent" economy, the government's strategy was "to persist in the ruinous make-believe that the UK was a first-rate world power and at the same time pursue the dream of New Jerusalem". This resulted in a leeching-away of the funds desperately needed for modernising industry. Though Barnett's polemic is flawed – the liberalism he condemns also produced postwar Germany's economic miracle – this furious book is essential reading.

Mukiwa by Peter Godwin (Picador, £7.99) In this prize-winning memoir, Godwin describes growing up in Rhodesia (Mukiwa means "white man" in Shona) with the vividness of a great novelist. Reading it is like being there. When very young in the early Sixties, he saw at first hand the results of the guerrilla campaign. (A doctor's son, he had the task of spraying flies during the post-mortems.) At the time, this merely added interest to the life of a juvenile colonial. Godwin has an astonishing gift for recall, from school fights to the killing of a cobra. Later, the mood darkens. Alone with Ian Smith, he contemplates assassination. His sister is accidentally killed by troops. He encounters the atrocity of civil war. Despite the horror, this remains a powerful account of both childhood and Africa.

Audiobooks

The best audiobooks need an author and reader both suited to the medium, but occasionally the quality of one can compensate for the other's failings. The to-ings and fro-ings in time of Peter Ackroyd's **Hawksmoor** (HarperCollins, 3hrs, £8.99) are hard to hold, and the language sounds more overwrought than on the page. But Derek Jacobi romps through the rococco phrasing with such competence that it's hard to stop listening to this tale of a modern detective's perception of a 17th-century architect's devilry.

Nick Hornby's demotic style is, by contrast, easy on the ear. But whoever got Hornby to read **Fever Pitch** (HarperCollins, 3hrs, £8.99) almost scored an own goal: his voice is amateurish and uneven. Persevere. He gains in confidence, and the book explores male obsession just as well as *High Fidelity*.

Christina Hardyment

Kate Atkinson: taking liberties with fictional method PHOTOGRAPH: GIULIO SAGGIN

Black forest gâteau

Penelope Lively enters a woodland time-warp

Human Croquet
by Kate Atkinson, Doubleday, £15.99

The opening of Kate Atkinson's first novel, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, echoed Tristram Shandy. Her second begins "Call me Isobel ..." Such devices can be seen as chutzpah or intertextuality, according to taste. My own feeling was – why shouldn't she? Intertextual references litter the pages of this vivid and intriguing novel – to Shakespeare especially. This can be a heavy-handed method – a right sinker, indeed – but not here.

Kate Atkinson's touch is deft, and the story fizzes and crackles along with so many twists and turns that it is well able to carry the freight of Shakespearean allusion and the airy references to higher physics which are integral to the content.

This is a novel about time. The space-time continuum, worm-holes in space, wrinkles in time – all those unimaginable concepts that lend themselves so nicely to fictional exploration. The past in the present is the theme here: hardly a new one, but seldom done with more panache or originality.

As in *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, the central matter is the dire family secret which preys upon childhood. Isobel and her brother Charles, are mewed up in Arden, the sepulchral suburban home in which they are reared by their dire aunt Vinny after the apparent death of their father and disappearance of the mother Eliza, for whom they pathetically yearn.

What happened to Eliza – the how and the why – are the threads which weave in and out of a craftily constructed narrative that takes every possible liberty with sequential tale-telling. The novel's structure reflects the slippery nature of time. Hints and clues of what will happen, or may have happened, are cunningly scattered – unobtrusive at the moment but rearing their heads in retrospect. A broken-heeled shoe found by the children in dreadful aunt Vinny's wardrobe seems to have been Eliza's and strikes a sinister chord; Charles's red hair reflects neither parent; and the adults flinch at certain references which ring alarm bells in the reader's head, but to which the children are oblivious.

The suburb in which Arden stands is built on the site of ancient woodland, which itself descends from the primeval forest. The streets are named after trees and the forest theme pervades the book. The crucial scene after which Eliza is seen no more takes place during a family picnic in nearby Boscrambe Wood, all that is left of the ancient woodland. And the family itself is the surviving stock of the Fairfaxes, who built their Elizabethan manor in the woods and whose fortunes subsequently declined to the proprietorship of the high-street grocery.

This sounds like a swerve into Mills & Boon territory. Never fear – if so, it is all a part of the deliberate and larky referential style. At one point, Isobel turns into a tree when pursued by a posse of drunken yobs. Or she may have done – because Isobel is an unreliable witness, and no wonder, given her traumatic youth. She finds herself periodically swept into time-warps and walks into a vanished inn or contemplates a former incarnation of her aunt in a bedroom at Arden. She is caught up in a re-running of a single day in which events turn out differently each time, a motif that raises the fashionable concept of alternative universes. Have I stepped into the same river twice? she wonders – overtaken again by intertextuality.

Isobel's is the narrative voice – an acerbic, knowing voice, except that what she doesn't know is the awful truth of adult deceit. But there is also a detached voice which fills us in on events about which Isobel cannot know. Plenty of liberties are taken with fictional method. On the whole it works, except for a chunk of medieval fantasy at the end.

As a participant character Isobel rather fades into the background. Kate Atkinson is excellent at subsidiary figures, ranging from devastating vignettes to the Greek chorus of the fearful Baxter family next door, where wife-battering and incest flourish. The strength of this clever, adventurous novel lies in its careful meshing of a compelling story with excursions into fantasy, experiment and outrageous grand guignol. It's something of a *tour de force*.

Amis is as good as a smile

Kevin should never have been felled by that coffee table, says Hugo Barnacle

Stuff *by Joseph Connolly, Faber, £14.99*

It always takes more effort to get something started than to keep it moving, whether it's a novel or a wheelbarrow. But Joseph Connolly tries a fraction too hard with the opening of *Stuff*: "Emily hit Kevin with a coffee table – just upped and did it. And was she now content with leaving the man writhing around on the ground (his eyes quite dulled yet lit with surprise, all overlaid with a thick and dripping, big brown slice of fear)?"

There is no telling what Connolly means by this. In what conceivable sense does fear correspond to fried bread or anything else that comes in dripping slices, brown or otherwise? A further slight problem is that we soon learn that Emily, an interior designer, keeps all her tables covered in knick-knacks whose disarrangement she cannot tolerate. So she wouldn't swing the coffee table at her husband even if she had the strength which, not being a giantess, she clearly can't have. Perhaps we should allow it as comic exaggeration.

Connolly's style sorts itself out after that. *Stuff* is his third comic novel in as many years and he is becoming highly accomplished. The black farce of the storyline recalls Tom Sharpe, the indignant narration recalls Kingsley Amis. In fact, Connolly reproduces some of Amis's favourite mannerisms more or less exactly.

Raymond, whose son is going out with Kevin and Emily's daughter, drops by. "Kevin had gone to the lavatory, now. He had actually said, much to Raymond's wondering disbelief, that the time had come for a man to do what a man had to do. No arch or roguish smile, no John Wayne accent, not even the merest trace of an incipient inverted comma: just said it – said it as if no one in the world had ever said it before."

This unblushing indulgence in stereotypical behaviour is a key trait of the characters Amis labelled "stooges". The difference is that Amis would probably have gone for the John Wayne accent to pile on the annoyance. He hated his stooges, whereas poor old useless Kevin is, oddly enough, quite a sympathetic character.

But the annoyance soon builds up all right. Emily's decor starts it off. Raymond seethes at the swagged curtains, the table lamps "made from ginger jars that had never seen ginger, matey", the dummy obelisk and the bowl of silver-wrapped dragees you mustn't eat. Amis always liked using pretentious and fiddly ornaments of costume or furnishing to get his characters and readers into a lather of helpless fury.

By the time Raymond's son and Emily's daughter appear, giggling at nothing in a deeply irritating way while Kevin utters *non-sequiturs* and Emily "acid-sweetly" threatens more domestic violence, Raymond is approaching true Amisian apoplexy. He "just turned away before all the blood in his body coursed up into his neck and blasted right out of his nostrils". Raymond even thinks, "If I had a Bren gun handy ... " In similar vein, Kevin later thinks of his wife as "*Obergruppenführer* Emily". Amis was inordinately fond of these old-time military allusions, but Raymond and Kevin, still in their forties, are a bit too young for them. And Raymond's comment on women ("I mean, what – maybe they're all born a bit doolally and as the years progress – through periods of instability and paranoia they all end up as terminally deranged") comes of obvious ancestry.

Imitative as it is, the book has enough energy to take on a life of its own and is often laugh-out-loud funny. Kevin's mortal terror of everyday situations, like talking to people or going into restaurants, is very well handled. The phrasemaking is apt and unshowy. The Sharpe-ish plot, a calculatedly absurd round of adultery, murder, insanity, businesses going bust and houses burning down, creates an exhilarating hysteria. Although, at 330 pages, it goes on too long, *Stuff* is better than Sharpe's own current work, and maybe better than Amis's final novels too.

There is a useful core of seriousness to the whole thing. The kids' incessant giggling, for instance, turns out to be for a reason quite opposite to the sexual smugness you first assume: a problem they won't discuss has left them permanently embarrassed with each other. Many of the characters who start off as caricatures or monsters acquire unexpected depth, while the ones who appear most normal to begin with sometimes prove to be howling nutters – but this never falls into a predictable pattern, so the story keeps its edge, its heightened atmosphere and its weird conviction.

Independent choice: literature for lads

By Robert Hanks

For a while, it looked as though masculinity was in crisis – confused, embarrassed, uncertain what it wanted. But to judge by the latest crop of paperback-original novels, all that has changed. Now men have sorted out what they want, and their list of demands turns out to be surprisingly easy to fill: they're not interested in successful careers or steady girlfriends (none of the first-person narrators in these books has either) so long as they can have alcohol, drugs, punk rock, a modicum of violence and occasional sex with their best mate's ex-girlfriend.

It helps, too, if the young lady – how shall we put this? – is prepared to motor in reverse gear. To put it plainly: most of these books share the conviction that anal intercourse (with a woman – all these men are unequivocally hetero) is the greatest treat a boy can have.

Perhaps we should start by mentioning the exception to this rule: John L Williams's **Faithless** (Serpent's Tail, £8.99). Williams is best known as an advocate of hard-boiled US crime fiction, so I half-expected his first novel to be a homegrown version. Mercifully, *Faithless* is decidedly British, in its weary, self-deprecating tone and its faithfully observed setting – London in the early Eighties.

The narrator, Jeff, a one-time aspiring rock musician, gets involved in a misguided attempt to blackmail a former mate who is now a big star. It all goes horribly wrong, and he ends up in trouble with far greedier and more vicious criminals. (The analogy with Thatcherism is blatant but not over-schematic.)

True, the book does have its anal side. Jeff works in a record-shop (it's presumably this, and the action in the vicinity of Highbury, that the blurb-writer had in mind when comparing Williams to Nick Hornby), which provides the excuse for some tedious rock trivia. The particularity of Williams's London settings and his unaffectedly witty prose are compensations. They look especially attractive next to the hugely affected, would-be witty prose of Charles Kennedy Scott's **Low Alcohol** (Headline Review, £8.99).

It's worth quoting a paragraph from Scott: "So where am I going? Yes, you may well ask: Where am I going? And, if you see me walking the streets with my aimless face, my off-centre hairstyle, my worn clothes and my shiny new boots, you may well wonder: where is he going?"

Well, he'd have to be going somewhere pretty bloody interesting to justify that blather. Sadly, despite some nicely turned moments of farce, *Low Alcohol* is a dull and profoundly annoying satirical fantasy in the manner of Martin Amis, full of urban angst, millennial portents and significant names. Scott's imagination falls between the stools of merciless precision and bludgeoning savagery.

The names, for example, are neither overtly funny (remember Caduta Massi in Amis's *Money*?) or blatantly meaningful (as in John Self). So our apathetic, self-pitying narrator is called Doug Down: he is haunted by a paranoid woman calling herself Lucia de Londres and his best mate (whose ex-girlfriend he eventually shags) is a *soi-disant* comedian called Andy Cipolin. The ex-girlfriend herself is Annis, which turns out to be a nickname derived from her favourite sexual practice. No prizes for guessing what that is (in Amis's *London Fields*, Nicola Six was similarly inclined). "Most girls like it," Annis tells Doug, "though they prefer not to admit it."

Pick of the week
Faithless by John L Williams

John McKenzie's **Are You Boys Cyclists?** (Serpent's Tail, £8.99) is more critical of male fantasies: which is not to say they're not on offer. "Don't worry," Matt, the narrator, reassures the reader: "This book isn't going to miss being part of the wank industry if I can help it." It is, you'll gather, a self-referential book, mixing a narrative about boxing, drugs, unemployment and sex in the Edinburgh of 1977 with musings on writing and reading books. Matt isn't far wrong when he describes it as "a cross between Charles Bukowski, Henry Miller, Jeanette Winterson and Kurt Vonnegut".

The climax arrives with twin orgies of violence and sex – intercut descriptions of a boxing match and a marathon sex session with Matt's best mate's ex, culminating in, um, a trip to the moon. It's hard to say if this is intended as male wish-fulfilment, or some sort of criticism. I'm not sure, either, whether this book is genuinely joyless and solipsistic or just pretending.

Mark Blackaby's **Look What They've Done to the Blues** (Gollancz, £9.99) is straightforward wish fulfilment: the hero, Charlie (a professional thug who's been to university), combines a middle-class frame of reference with working-class credibility. He is good-looking, tough, clever, irresistible to women and destined to be hugely rich, if he can collect the proceeds from an old job – a task that provides the vestigial plot. Even with these advantages, he contrives to be one of life's losers (thankfully, or the book would be unbearably smug). It's his ex who gets shagged by his best mate, and he doesn't get the ultimate sexual treat but merely watches a video of somebody else doing it. Hardly elevating, but certainly entertaining. That's how boys like it.

Spliced girls

Maya Jaggi explores conflicting desires in new Amerindian literature

Arranged Marriage *and* **The Mistress of Spices** *by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Black Swan, £6.99, and Doubleday, £12.99*

As a new generation of British Asian writers – including Hanif Kureishi, Meera Syal and Bidisha – charts "inbetweenness", there is a parallel burgeoning across the Atlantic. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is among a growing number of young American authors of Indian descent (such as Anjana Appachana, Indira Ganesan, Zia Jaffrey and Ameena Meer) who explore the meeting of two worlds through a perspective that derives from both.

Arranged Marriage won the American Book Award in 1995. Its short stories chart territory carved out in the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee (also Calcutta-born and California-based): the "immigrant dream" as it rubs against US reality; the fear and exhilaration as boundaries erode and traditions crumble; the lure and fosses of rule-breaking. Despite a title that threatens uniformity, the arranged marriages are merely emblems of stricture. The focus is on women; the freedoms and illicit desires that a new life in "Amreeka" can stir in those shackled by inherited roles. Characters range from the traditional to the cosmopolitan, from the incipiently rebellious to those "Indian yet not Indian" creatures mocked on the subcontinent as "ABCDs" ("American-born Confused Desis").

As America tempts – "the neon Budweiser emblem winking on and off like a risky invitation" – a divorced woman quits spice-grinding for fast-food take-outs, a bride ditches saris to secrete her jeans from policing in-laws, and a daughter rehearses the words to tell a distant mother of a white boyfriend. Transplanted couples' expectations collide, as men revert to the "prehistoric values" a mother warns her US-raised daughter against.

Myths of womanhood control, but can sometimes liberate. In "The Maid Servant's Story", a woman views an aunt's tale as a warning: "A preview of my own life which I thought I had fashioned so cleverly, so differently from my mother's, but which is only a repetition, in a different raga, of her tragic song. Perhaps it is like this for all daughters, doomed to choose for ourselves, over and over, the men who have destroyed our mothers."

Divakaruni is no apologist for the American dream, eyeing the "Paki-bashing" of America's own "dotbusters" (after the red bindi on a married woman's forehead) and fatal muggings in the 7-Eleven. Resisting facile binaries of East versus West, she unpicks with irony her characters' mutual illusions and envies.

The modest realism of *Arranged Marriage* makes the failure of *The Mistress of Spices* all the more puzzling. In the novel, an old, village-born woman, once kidnapped by pirates and taught the secrets of spice-magic on a tropical island, runs a store in Oakland, California. Chatting to her wares ("Spices, what does this mean?"), Nayantara, or "star seer", divines migrants' ills and desires: "Green cards, promotions, girls with lotus eyes." Since her powers rest on celibacy, when she falls for a young Amerindian, doses herself with a youth elixir and beds him, the spices wreak revenge via the San Andreas fault. "Spices, I caused it," she moans, as the earth moves.

This drivel is threaded with "real" lives: Haroun, a servant turned taxi driver; Ahuja, a battered wife; Jagjit, a bullied schoolboy. None rises above cliché as the author attempts a lofty compassion to the "lost brown faces": "Garment factories smelling of starch and sweat and immigration raids, women handcuffed and piled crying into vans ..."

The compulsion to address a white American reader, latent in the stories, becomes blatant as the novel strives to explain. But pandering with fake folklore to New Age mysticism leaves its characters exoticised and diminished.

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

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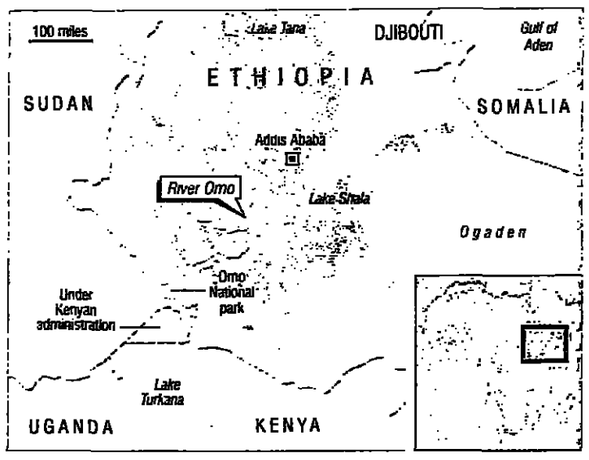
Born to be wild

The Omo valley in Ethiopia could be the last wilderness in Africa. By Caroline Seed



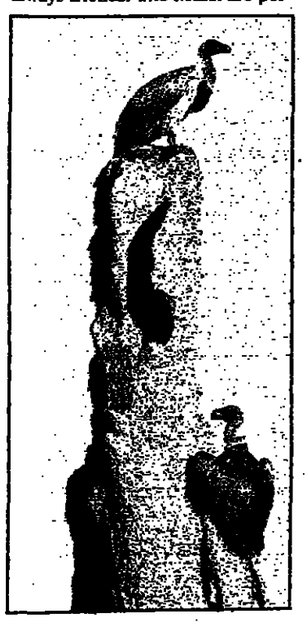
Still are warriors: the Karo, Mursi and Hamar tribes are permanently at war with each other. The clay lip plate worn by Mursi women, top, determines the bride's price: a large lip plate equates to 50 head of cattle – enough for seven Kalashnikov rifles, the real currency of the area

"You like Utopia?" The first and most enduring impression of Ethiopia is an endless series of friendly faces cheerfully mispronouncing their country's name. Some of these faces belong to handsomely attired Orthodox priests, some to white-robed pilgrims, some to shepherd boys, some to tall, beautiful women with beads in their hair. But in the Omo valley, a remote area in the far south west near the Kenyan and Sudanese borders, the people have only recently become aware that such a thing as Ethiopia exists, and they ask a different question.

"You have razor blade?"

I eyed the ridged network of garish scars decorating their bodies and flapped a hand rather urgently to our guide, Alex, who ambled over with a grin. As usual he was prepared for anything, and handed me a bag bulging with strings of brightly coloured beads: much better for the skin, and the Karo people loved them. We were instant hits. Faces lit with humour, the Karo draped the beads around their wrists and necks and started to prod and poke us gently.

The bright-eyed and endlessly curious Karo are one of the most threatened tribes of the lower Omo. They number fewer than 1,000, and a single epidemic could obliterate them; but more worrying are other tribes in the area, who are not always friends. The Mursi are permanently at war with the Hamar, the Hamar with their cousins the Karo; and the Bumi fight both the Karo and the Surma whenever they can. The women scarify their chests to beautify themselves, but the men do so to indicate their having killed an enemy or a dangerous animal.



Few areas remain in Africa that can be described as true wilderness, but the valley of the wide, smooth-flowing Omo River is a good candidate – a lost world, rendered almost uninhabitable by the tsetse fly. Here spectacular landscapes are unblemished by man, and huge herds of eland and buffalo roam across the unspoiled savanna grassland, along with giraffe, elephant, zebra, lion and leopard. Unused to tourists, the animals are wild and shy, but despite having been warned that game was far less visible than in other East African countries, we were not disappointed.

Alex, a professional hunter, has an infectious enthusiasm for the country as well as an impressive knowledge of its wildlife, and cheerfully woke us for each morning's safari at 5am. Spotting wildlife in the grey light of dawn was extremely difficult. Alex patiently pointed to a clump of dry, spindly bushes in the distance. Yawning, I picked up my binoculars to see the two enormous brown eyes of a gerenuk – a slim antelope – staring straight at me. Next he waved at a dark smudge on the horizon, which turned into a massive herd of tiang – related to wildebeest – browsing peacefully.

Gradually, as I became more aware of what to look for, curved sticks poking into the skyline materialised into oryx, rocks into baboon, and bushes into kudu, waterbuck, oribi and hartebeest. The bird life was magnificent: we saw secretary birds, bustards and great flocks of carmine bee-eaters as well as an abundance of vultures and birds of prey. By mid-morning the game would have vanished, to find shelter from the broiling heat, and we would return to camp.

The Omo camp is currently the only permanent one in the area, and is set on the banks of the river, pitched in the shade of tall trees occasionally inhabited by a colony of colobus monkeys. Billed as a luxury camp, it has all the required trappings: twin beds, flush lavatories, pedestal basins and hot showers, housed beneath a dozen neatly thatched roofs. This is usually a hunting camp, but the owner is happy to accommodate tourists on photographic and walking trips. It is possible to hire a vehicle and driver and travel independently, but the roads are rough and an experienced mechanic and a supply of spare parts are a must. We had three flat tyres and needed to change our fuel filter twice during our two-day drive back to Addis Ababa.

Safaris in the early evening are perhaps the most idyllic. The air is warm and soft as velvet, the sky a hazy lavender. Standing high on the back of our jeep, we bounced across the baked brown grasses, negotiating herds of gazelle and tiang.

As night drew in, Deganu, our tracker, scanned around the vehicle with a spotlight. Suddenly another world took shape: the day shift of antelope was transposed to the night shift of predators. Our first excitement was spying a genet cat, a miniature leopard with a tail as thick as a man's wrist; then a civet cat darted behind some acacia trees. Fresh hyena tracks padded down the dusty track and African barn owls swooped overhead. More sinister were the dozens of red eyes that glimmered malevolently along the softly silted banks of the Omo, and after counting 18 crocodiles opposite our camp I wondered about the group of Italian tourists (the only other tourists we saw) we'd spotted earlier swimming in the river.

The most vivid memory is the sighting of my first leopard. At 4am, we were huddled shivering in the jeep, the air chill, when Deganu hissed excitedly: "Leopard, leopard, leopard." It was pitch dark and he swung the lamp to the right as Alex stamped on the brakes. Suddenly a liquid silk form of black and gold froze in its tracks, just yards away. The leopard's eyes stared at us, stunned, captured by Deganu's lamp for perhaps 10 seconds, and then the powerful muscles flexed and he sprang into the blackness.

> **'The evening air is warm and soft as velvet, the sky a hazy lavender'**

We'd risen earlier than usual in order to visit the Mursi tribe, who are renowned for their practice of inserting large, circular clay plates behind the lower lips of their women. These are purely symbolic, and the size of the lip plate determines the size of the bride price. A large lip plate, for example, will bring in 50 head of cattle. And 49 cattle can buy seven Kalashnikov rifles, the most significant currency of all in this part of the world.

It was a six-hour bone-rattling drive to the nearest Mursi village, punctuated briefly by stops to view buffalo, warthog and lesser kudu. There were ample antelope but giraffe were scarce; not only are they easier to kill than other game, but the Mursi relish their meat. On the edge of the Mago National Park we spotted the bleached remains of a dead elephant, picked so clean that it appeared to have been there for a decade, not just a month. The Mursi, Alex told us, were partial to elephant meat, too.

Sweat-drenched and covered in insect bites, we finally arrived at a clutch of thatched huts shimmering beneath the searing midday sun. Two tall warriors stood on the horizon with their spears, but otherwise all was still, silent. Then, the instant our jeep entered the village compound, the silence gave way to a deafening uproar.

Swarms of people erupted out of the huts and raced for us, shouting at top volume, waving their arms furiously. The next second we were surrounded by an agitated, excited crowd who grabbed at us, yanking our T-shirts and pinching our skin, their eyes feverish. "Photo, photo, photo!" they shrieked, fighting each other to get to us, thrusting warthog tusks into our pockets and clay plates into our hands. "Ten birr. Ten birr." They snapped their fingers in our faces, refusing to take their wares back unless we paid for them.

The deal when you visit the Mursi is that if you take a photograph of them, you either pay them or give them a present. Of course, every one of the 60 villagers wanted a gift for themselves, one for their mother and one for each of their children, and the whole event rapidly turned into a bun fight. At one point a six-foot tall woman was tugging my right hand, while another woman was pulling my left in the opposite direction, both yelling "photo!" at the tops of their voices. A small boy, about five years old, clung limpet-like to my left calf.

When Alex started the jeep's engine I was beside him before you could say "10 birr". Because no matter how statuesque the women, how endearing the children, one hour of the Mursi was quite enough.

As we roared off we passed a land cruiser full of Americans coming the other way. I was surprised to learn that, on average, three vehicles visit the Mursi each day, and that most tourists undertake the exhausting trip to the Omo valley purely to see the Mursi. I hoped they weren't going to be disappointed.

Ethiopian Airlines (0171-491 9119) flies five times a week from Heathrow to Addis Ababa. Through Tradewings (0171-631 1840) a return ticket costs £561 including tax. Bridge The World (0171-911 0900) sells flights via Cairo on Egyptair for £454. British visitors can get a visa from the Ethiopian Embassy at 17 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PZ (0171-589 7212). Trips to the Omo valley are run by Ethiopian Rift Valley Safaris, PO Box 3658 Addis Ababa (00 251 1 55 1127).

Simon Calder

'The pay is £100 a week, which buys more in Ecuador than in Edale'

"Wanted. Young, skinny, wiry fellows not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages $25 per week."

This is how the new edition of *Work Your Way Around the World* begins. Fortunately the vacancies in question have long been filled – the advertisement was placed in 1860 by the Pony Express. The book's author, Susan Griffith, found the poster at a museum in Washington DC. But some of Britain's present-day travel enterprises are reporting alarming staff shortages.

Travel has never been among the world's best-paying industries, but a wage of £360 per month including board and lodging in a beautiful part of England or Wales seems a reasonably attractive prospect. Yet Edwina Edwards of the Youth Hostels Association says she is having trouble filling the 400 vacancies for assistant wardens this summer.

"We're getting plenty of people responding to our advertisements, but many of them see what the job's like and then don't bother to fill in the form. Worse still, some of the people who do apply and succeed at the interview turn down the job when it's offered."

Hang on, though – why do you need staff, anyway? What about the chores that hostellers are supposed to do? Apparently there has been some customer resistance to the old-established routine of an hour or two of housework.

"Expectations have changed, and now we rely on voluntary help," says Ms Edwards – though in the last hostel I stayed in, the resident warden didn't give the impression that there was a substantial element of choice on the subject of cleaning the kitchen.

It seems that southern softies like me are proving less than co-operative in filling the vacancies.

"The north-south divide is really quite dramatic. We're well staffed in the north, but still have a number of vacancies south of the Peak District. Some people think that working in a youth hostel will be an extended holiday, and when they find it isn't they look for something else."

In my experience, a lot of them go abroad. Every backpackers' hostel from San Diego to Sydney seems to have at least one British employee. But if cleaning up in Coalport or landing a job in Land's End appeals, call Edwina Edwards on 01426 939216.

Should rafting the Zambezi or trekking across the Andes appeal more, then the person to talk to is Moira Welikanna (0171-370 6951). She can't get the staff these days, either.

Ms Welikanna handles recruitment for the adventure travel company Encounter, and is trying to recruit expedition leaders.

The pay is similar to the YHA – board and lodging plus about £100 a week, which buys more in Ecuador than it does in Edale. "The basic job description," says Ms Welikanna, "is simple: to take people safely and enjoyably from A to B". But you are on continuous duty 24 hours a day, responsible for 20 paying passengers – and may have to sort out anything from a clogged oil filter on the overland truck to armed insurrection (though not usually among the clients). To help you cope, you get up to a year's training, half of it overseas.

The qualifications are straightforward: "You've got to be over 25, and able to think on your feet, stay very cool and keep your sense of fun."

John Leivers has been an expedition leader for 10 years. "The best thing is the sense of achievement when you spend all day going up a mountain on some of the worst roads on earth, and finally discover wonderful volcanic scenery. The worst thing is when the truck breaks down half-way up."

The joys of working to travel are confirmed by some readers of the last edition of *Work Your Way Around the World*. Angie Copley writes from Caracas: "If I hadn't spent my last £10 on your book I'd never be where I am today. I started to realise that what I had previously thought was impossible, of travelling and working as well, could really happen."

It couldn't happen now: the price of the new eighth edition has risen to £10.99.

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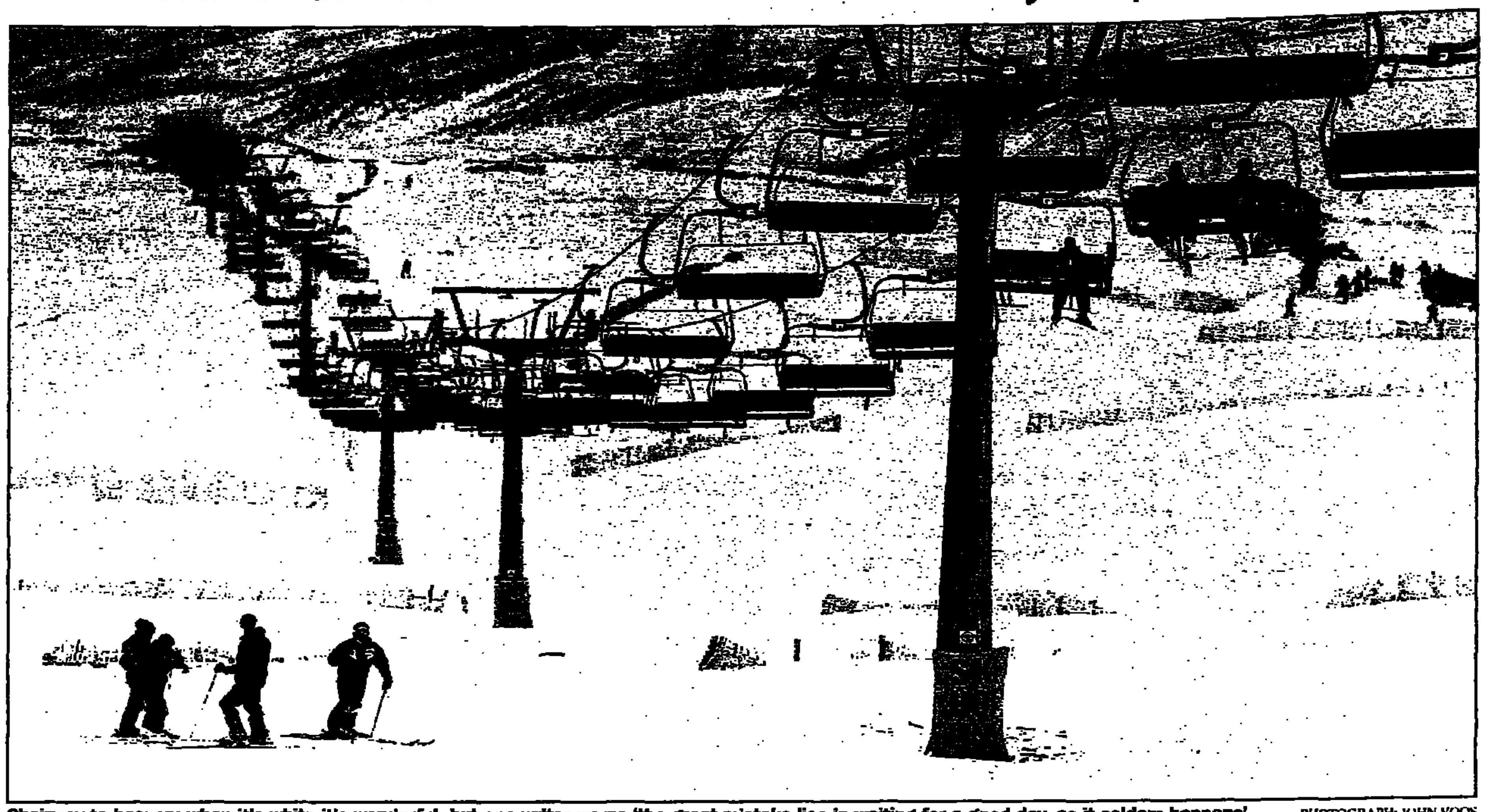
The Scots ski into luxury

Gone are the austere days of the Scottish Ski Club. Now all they need north of the Border is a little more snow. By Stephen Wood



Chairway to heaven: when it's white it's wonderful, but one writer warns 'the great mistake lies in waiting for a good day, as it seldom happens' PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN VOOS

Early tomorrow morning, a Eurostar train leaves Waterloo for the French Alps. This will be a "preview" trip for the travel trade and the press; but next season Eurostar will run a regular service from London to Bourg St Maurice, from where it is a short trip to La Plagne, Les Arcs (linked to Bourg St Maurice by a funicular railway), Tignes and Val d'Isère. Unless you enjoy hanging around airports, enduring long coach transfers and polluting the atmosphere with fossil fuels, you'll look forward to that.

But it won't be the first direct train service from London to the ski slopes. Last week I caught the overnight Caledonian Sleeper from Euston to Fort William for a first, long-delayed skiing trip to Scotland. As the train rumbled up the West Coast main line, I lay in my bunk reading *Skisters*, Myrtle Simpson's long-out-of-print history of Scottish skiing. After a last look at England – on a damp, dark night at Crewe – I fell asleep: when I next looked out it was from the single-track railway across Rannoch Moor on a bright Scottish morning.

Simpson's book reinforces the view that skiing in Scotland can sometimes be an "experience" rather than a pleasure. Even before the First World War, she reports, "skiing was becoming popular [and] members of the Scottish Ski Club began to feel that their sport was degraded as a result." The committee therefore decided that applicants could qualify for membership only by completing a series of strenuous ski tours, covering 75 miles in all and involving a total of at least 12,000ft of ascents – with an 8lb back-pack, and without ski lifts. Expeditions in the Alps did not count, since obviously they were for softies: the "significant difference between people who ski happily in Scotland and those in the Alps," says Simpson, is that "Scottish skiers have an unlimited capacity to put their head down against a blizzard." She quotes one enthusiastic skier as saying that the weather in Scotland "is always indifferent to bad, and the great mistake lies in waiting for a good day, as it seldom happens".

I waited the best part of three months for a good day, telephoning Scotland regularly from mid-December onwards; but my patience was rewarded with snow and sunshine. And the weather wasn't the only thing that belied the image of Scottish skiing. The Nevis Range ski area, only 10 minutes' drive from my tiny but comfortable bedroom in Fort William station, is the newest Scottish ski resort, having opened in the 1989/90 season. So its facilities reach a standard of which the dour old Scottish Ski Club would have strongly disapproved: a six-seat gondola carries you 2.3km from the road up to a big restaurant and bar, and 10 ski lifts cover a ski area which stretches up to the peak of Aonach Mor, at 1,220m the highest point in Scotland to be reached by a lift.

The views from the restaurant terrace were vast on such a clear day. Set on the north face of the Nevis range, the resort looks down on the wide Lochy valley between Loch Linnhe and Loch Lochy, which makes a soft, green-and-brown foreground to a panorama of rugged, mainly snow-covered mountains stretching from the island of Rhum, out in the Atlantic, across to Inverness on the North Sea coast. An etched metal plate on the terrace balustrade attempts to identify each mountain, but the jagged line was too long to follow and the names were no easier for an English-speaker, being mostly bad anagrams (Sgurr Thuilm?) or Gaelic expletives (Stob Mhil Bheathain!).

Poor Nevis has had a terrible season so far: the resort hoped to have had 48,000 skier-days by now, but has achieved only a third of that number. This January was one of the driest on record; and February's good snowfalls were washed down the mountain by heavy rain. Which is a great pity, because a new, £13m resort needs better luck, and because – even on last week's limited snow – it offers good, challenging skiing. Many of the pistes on the main face of the mountain were narrow, the thin snow having been bulldozed in from the edges to provide a reasonable, vegetation- and rock-free surface; and all had big patches of ice, offering an experience to go with the pleasure. But the main snow bowl (well, a side-plate, really), with a red run merging into a blue, was well covered and exhilarating.

In one respect, Nevis lived up to the image of Scotland as a tough place to ski. As noted last week, Killington's double-diamond black runs had been a doddle, but even the reds at Nevis were a desirable challenge, most of all in an east-facing bowl called Coire Dubh. Cally Fleming, the resort's marketing manager, insisted that I had to ski into the bowl – and made sure that I did so by leading me there, even though its lift wasn't working, and there was also a slight risk of avalanche.

We edged up a sheet-ice slope to a ridge near the peak. I looked over the edge. Stob Mhil Bheathain! From the ridge was a near-vertical drop on to a very steep slope, which levelled out gradually into an unpisted bowl full of snow. Rather than have Fleming do it, I pushed myself off the ridge, hit the snow flying – and then did a slow, anxious traverse, wondering when I would dare to turn down the slope. By the third turn, of course, I was loving it.

I would have had another go – maybe two or three; but without the lift, it was a long haul around the resort to get back to the ridge. And then I might have missed the summit run off the peak. It's only a short blue run, but I spent a long time on it; I kept stopping to get a bit more of the dramatic view to the south west, of Ben Nevis, Cam Dearg and *Sgurr a' Mhàim*.

something to declare

Trouble spots

No-go nations around the world

Antarctica and the Americas share a common benefit: they are continents deemed safe by the Foreign Office, unlike Africa, Asia and Europe.

The FO's Travel Advice Unit this week added Albania to its list of places that you are advised to avoid. The other nine blacklisted countries are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Central African Republic, Iraq, Liberia, Somalia, Tajikistan and Western Sahara.

Four other areas (not entire countries) are ruled out-of-bounds: Chechnya (Russia), Jammu and Kashmir (India) and Kivu (Zaire).

The Travel Advice Unit (0171-238 4503) advises that the following should be avoided "unless on essential business": Angola, Bosnia, Rwanda, plus the remainder of Zaire and eastern Turkey.

True or false:

Travel writing without pictures is like a kiss without a moustache?

Like the proverbial unmoustachioed kiss, asking any enthusiastic traveller to describe their trip can be as disappointing as eating strawberries without cream. They'll start on about magnificent scenery, gorgeous national costume, and oh! those jewel-like colours at sunset ... But after a few minutes even the most verbose will be groping for the right words, and after a while they'll just say: "Stuff it, here are the photographs."

Or they'll resort to comparison: "a bit like Scotland but warmer" for any uninhabited upland; "like Cornwall with coconuts", for most beaches further south than 50 degrees – or, my favourite – "Benidorm with bilharzia", for any new resort.

Making the words paint the picture is a difficult skill: comparisons can belittle, hyperbole can annoy, clichés can tire. Show me another undiscovered paradise with crystal waters set in a land of contrasts with breathtaking scenery and I'll show you a travel writer whose next break needs to be a fortnight somewhere quiet, with a nice, limpid pool of imagination to dive into.

As the producer of BBC Radio 4's *Breakaway* I'm always looking for ways to transport the listener from the Saturday breakfast table (or Sunday night bedside) to the shores of Vanuatu. I was told by an old Radio 4 hand – the producer of *From Our Own Correspondent*, that a reporter should aim to "make the listeners smell the streets" (although it is questionable whether the Saturday morning listener would want to get that close to Old Delhi market or Mombasa harbour). We try to find writers who can communicate their enthusiasm for travel without sounding smug, who can conjure up sparkling images, who can give an accurate portrayal for the would-be tourist without making him or her sag under the weight of air fares and train times.

Today, our campaign to make a word paint 1,000 pictures gets a boost as Pete McCarthy rejoins the programme as presenter. Is it true that travel-writing without pictures can be as complete as a kiss without a moustache? Listen and decide.

Eleanor Garland

'Breakaway', presented by Pete McCarthy, is on Radio 4 at 9.30am today and at 10.45pm on Sunday.

Bargain of the week

You can now travel free from Heathrow airport – but only by bus. The usual minimum adult fare on London's buses is 50 pence. But in and around Europe's busiest airport, it falls to zero thanks to "Freeflow Heathrow". This is BAA's campaign to increase the proportion of people who travel to Heathrow by public transport. The company picks up the bill for travellers on buses 105, 111, 140 and 285 between the central airport area and Bath Road on the airport's northern perimeter. Beyond these limits you have to pay a fare.

The main benefit is for air travellers who find themselves delayed for a few hours. You can hop on one of the buses for a free ride to the only tourist attraction for miles, the Heathrow Visitor Centre. This interesting exhibition hall opens daily at 10am, closing at 5pm at weekends and 7pm the rest of the week. And, like the bus, it is free.

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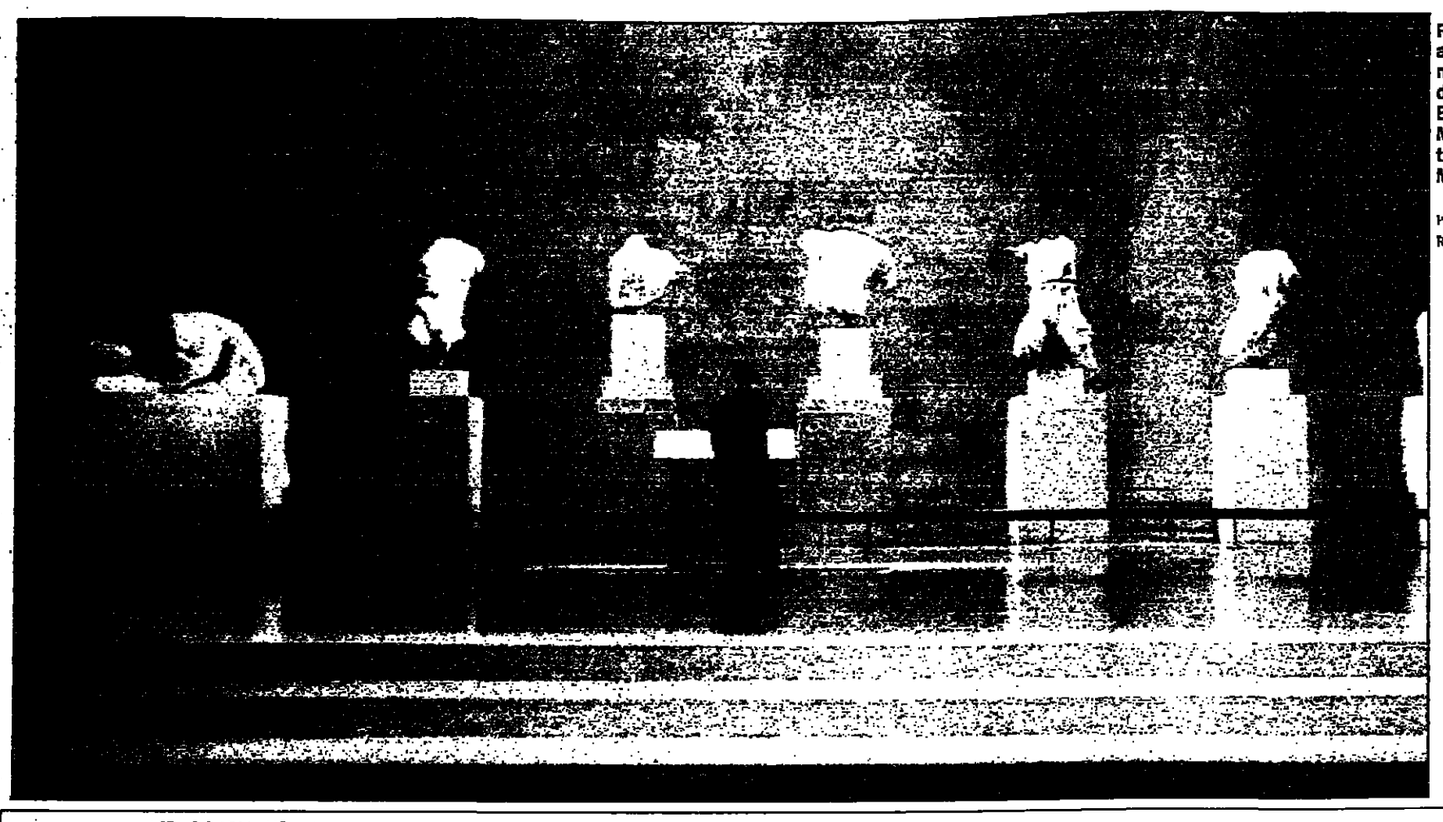
History comes alive

Homework? It's fun for all the family. By Deborah Jackson



Rocks of ages: the much disputed Elgin Marbles at the British Museum

PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS

At school, studying for Geography O-level, we compared and contrasted the formation of river valleys. Then my parents took me to the Lake District, and there at the head of Windermere was the finest glacial valley of them all.

Days out with an educational bent are brilliant for children to find inspiration in a restored building, an ancient costume or a virtual scene from the past. Over the next two weeks we are making a swift tour of a section of the National Curriculum: the Key Stage Two History Programme, which has six study units for seven-to-11-year-olds, each matched with ideas for family outings.

Unit 1: Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain

Pupils must study one of these, and most schools opt for the Romans, who left a wealth of forts, amphitheatres, weapons, and roads to get us to them.

Romans: Get an insight into their domestic life at Rockbourne Roman Villa near Fordingbridge in Hampshire (01725 518541), which has mosaics, a coin hoard, leather shoes and even human skeletons. Meanwhile Chedworth Roman Villa at Yarnworth, Cheltenham (01242 890256) has its own water shrine, bathhouses and mosaics.

And there's no deeper cleansing experience than the steamy waters that bubble up from the Sacred Spring in Bath at 46 C. The Roman Baths Museum (01225 477785) displays votive offerings, the gilt bronze head of the goddess Sulis Minerva and 2,000-year-old curses cast into the waters by Romans with revenge on their minds.

For military organisation see Caerleon Roman Fortress (01222 500200), once home of 5,500 élite Roman infantry. The soldiers' giant leisure complex had heated changing rooms, a swimming pool and a gymnasium, plus a 6,000-seater auditorium for gladiatorial events.

And then there's Hadrian's Wall. Where should you start? Senhouse Roman Museum on the Cumbrian coast (01900 816168), once the headquarters of Hadrian's coastal defence system, is home to a large collection of altar-stones and some stunning sculpture. Look out for the famous Serpent Stone. Heading east, Northumberland's Housesteads Roman Fort at Haydon Bridge (01434 344363) features the only known Roman hospital in Britain, and a 24-seater latrine with flush tank. Nearby, Corbridge near Hexham (01434 632349) has the famous Corbridge Lion.

For a more intimate view of Roman life, the Verulamium Museum at St Albans (01727 819339) has re-created rooms, hands-on discovery areas and computer databases. Once a month, legionaries describe the lifestyle and tactics of the Roman Imperial Army.

Anglo-Saxons: There are plenty of Saxon churches around, but for a glimpse into the secular way of life, Bede's World in Jarrow (0191-489 2106) depicts work and play in the early Middle Ages – with Anglo-Saxon cooking demonstrations. Outside, an Anglo-Saxon farm features rare breeds and authentic crops.

West Stow Country Park (01284 728718) in Suffolk contains a pagan Anglo-Saxon village, based on a settlement dating from AD420-650, with reconstructed oak buildings.

Vikings: No study is complete without a trip to the Jorvik Viking Centre in York (01904 643211), which has tools, clothing and other clues to a forgotten way of life. Travel in a "time car" back to Norman Britain, hear Old Norse as it was spoken, experience the dark, smoky homes and the smells of fish and pigs in the market place.

Unit 4: ancient Greece

All junior-age children are expected to learn about the ancient Greeks. Unfortunately, the best trappings of this distant civilisation are housed in the giant tourist park known as Athens.

In Britain, you could begin at the British Museum (0171 636 1555), home to the much-disputed Elgin Marbles. An extensive collection begins with the Greek Bronze Age, including marble figurines dating from 3000 BC, and carved pillars from elaborate tombs, from 1300 BC. Greek myths and legends are depicted in statues, pottery and jewellery.

Also open without appointment is the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, a large room in the classics department of Reading University (01734 318420). It has painted pottery and other artefacts.

Unit 6: a past non-European society

Options include ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, the Maya, Benin, the Aztecs.

The ancient Egyptians have Tutankhamun to thank for most of their 20th-century publicity. The boy king's tomb, mummy and golden mask have been replicated in Dorchester, Dorset (01305 269571), where visitors can stroll as if through the pyramid itself.

For the rest, it's back to the British Museum, where the new Mexican gallery explores 4,000 years of "Mesoamerican" tribes and peoples. The Aztecs and Mayas are well represented, with examples of ritual dress, idols, fertility symbols and creation myths.

Next week: Life in Tudor Times; Victorian Britain; and Britain since 1930.

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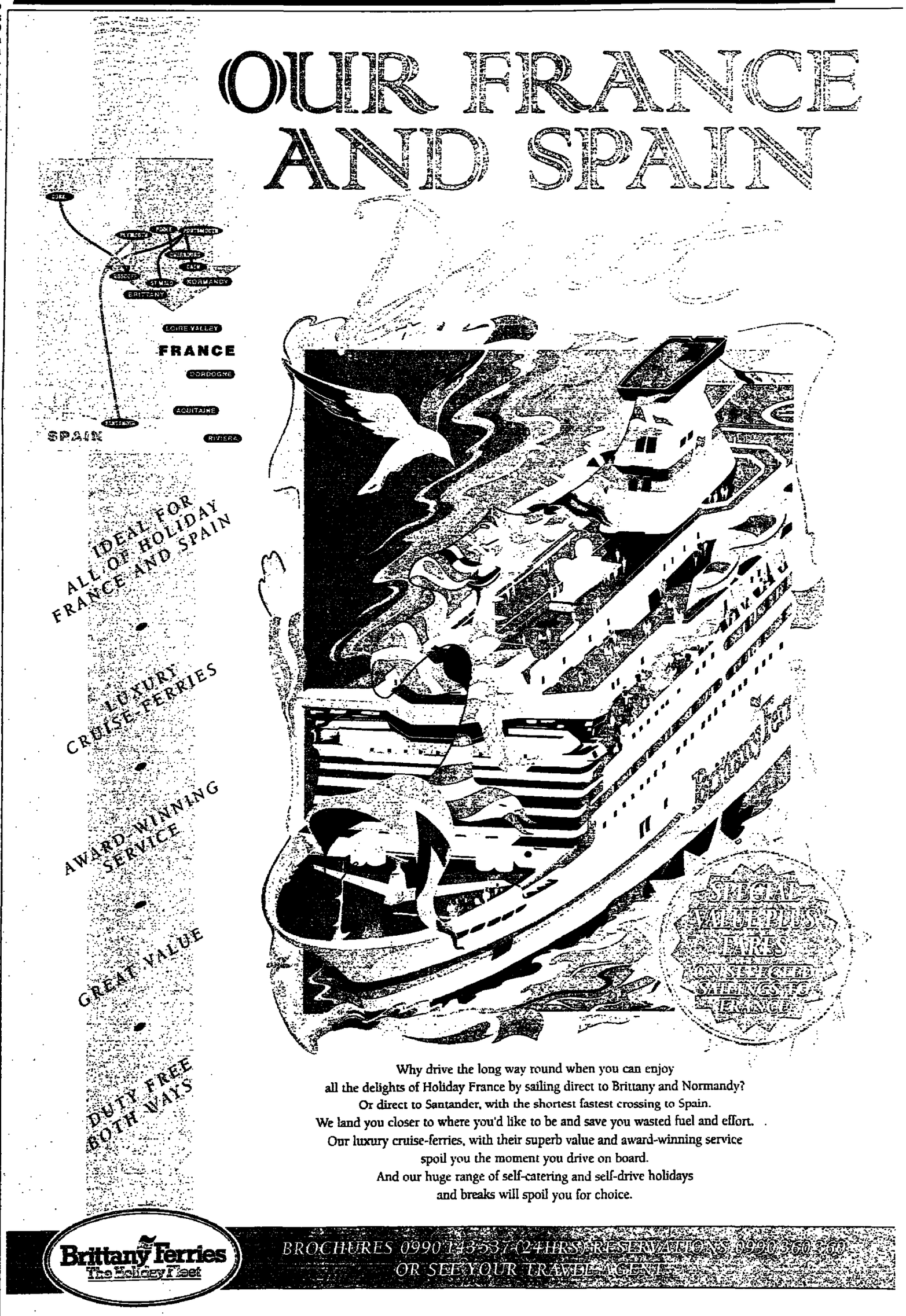

The lure of the good life

Smallholdings are 'in', reports Daniel Butler

John Seymour is a walking advertisement for the philosophy of "small means good": a fit, healthy man of 82 who could easily pass for 60.

"We are genuinely self-sufficient: we produce all our own food and live and eat extremely well," says this father of the British self-sufficient movement.

He is in London on a flying visit, and it is clear from the way that he keeps glancing at his watch that two days in town have been more than enough. Now he is chafing to get back to his smallholding in County Wexford: "London is nothing more than an ugly muddle of buildings joined on to each other," he says. "Most people who live in cities are purely parasitical. One day the infrastructure will break down. They will find nothing happens when they turn on the tap or switch on the light. What will we do then if we've lost all our old skills?"

He says this desire to master dying crafts lies behind his decision in 1956 to buy a smallholding in Suffolk and take up farming: "I thought I was the only person in the world trying to rediscover lost skills and get closer to the land," he says. "Then I found a group of people in America doing the same thing, but there was no one else in Britain moving in that direction." The picture was the same eight years later when he moved to Pembrokeshire with his wife and three daughters, but over the last 30 years much has changed: "Now 'drop-ins' [as he calls his fellow New Age peasants] almost outnumber the locals."

The new converts were a mixed blessing, and as they moved in, so Seymour moved west, upping sticks for Ireland 16 years ago, where he now has a five acre holding based around a crossbred Jersey-Angus cow: "She is the middle of the arch," he explains proudly. "Her milk feeds us, the pigs and the poultry. She provides all our milk, cheese and butter – not to mention all that manure, which keeps the place fertile." Tea, coffee and cereals need to be bought, but otherwise this small plot feeds three adults full-time and about 80 students a year, who come to learn his skills on week-long courses.

There are no figures to back up Seymour's anecdotal evidence about a shift to "the good life", but estate agents along the Welsh border (where smallholdings are still common), say that demand for such properties is booming.

Seymour has certainly played a part as a sort of spiritual leader for this move. In 1973 he and his wife Sally published a manual, *Self-Sufficiency*, which was an instant best-seller. This was followed up in 1976 by an illustrated guide, *The Complete Book of Self-Sufficiency*, which has since sold more than 650,000 copies across 13 countries. As a result, he has inevitably been called the movement's mentor, a term that he resents intensely: "I'm certainly not a guru," he protests. "I don't have a turban or a flowing robe. If I can inspire a few people to make their own beer, that's good enough for me."

At first glance, the demand for his courses and suitable smallholdings, at a time when the general agricultural trend is towards larger and larger farms, would seem to suggest that Seymour's vision is catching on. Appearances are deceptive, however, says the estate agent Ryan Williams, at McCartneys in Hay-on-Wye in Herefordshire. He sees few buyers who are committed to total self-sufficiency: "The smallholding kick which was all the rage a few years back has stumbled with the harsh reality of Welsh winters," he says. Ironically,

John Seymour: 'Most people who live in cities are purely parasitical' PHOTO: JOHN MINEHAN

Williams believes that much of the impetus towards self-sufficiency comes from those same electrical consumer goods that Seymour's "hardline" greens despise.

Thanks to faxes, improved telecommunications and – above all – computers, it is increasingly possible for people to "telecommute". "There is no typical buyer, but many are people who work from home," says Williams. Other small farms sell to people who have taken early redundancy and want an active retirement, while some go to young professionals who want a safe environment for their children and are prepared to commute relatively long distances to the Midlands or M4 corridor.

Thus it seems that a desire for an improved quality of life, rather than a romantic desire to produce their own food, is the main motive behind today's New Age peasantry. Recent research by the Henley Centre for Forecasting suggests a widespread desire across the population to shift to a more leisured lifestyle: 42 per cent of those surveyed said they would like to go part time if they could afford it. A quarter said they would take a lower-paid job if it meant less stress, and 28 per cent said they would choose more leisure rather than more money. Of those questioned, 16 per cent said they would even take a pay cut if it meant they could spend more time at home.

Of course, once they are burdened with a mortgage, personal pensions and credit cards, it can be difficult or impossible for many people to make the financial adjustments that come with a slower pace of life. This explains why so many of Williams's customers are either young parents keen to swap small, but valuable, urban flats for cheaper, big rural properties, or older people with adequate savings to take early retirement. Even for these people, however, there can be hidden surprises in the form of things previously taken for granted – such as the absence of local supermarkets and restaurants.

But Seymour has words of grudging encouragement for those reluctant to leave urban life: "Cities are desirable, provided they're not too big," he says. "Civilisation gives the true countryman the benefits of culture, universities and so on. After all, the Greece of Homer's time – where there were no cities to speak of – was a poorer place than that of Plato."

Duff Hart-Davis

For centuries salmon have been caught in tidal pools ... now there's sludge

Mud, mud, hideous mud: that is what has beaten the blood of anyone looking out over the Severn Estuary from Oldbury as the tide is ebbing, and that is what has driven Philip Jones, one of the area's last traditional salmon fishermen, out of business.

He is in no doubt as to the cause of the disaster. "It's that bastard there," he says, pointing past the original Severn bridge to the second crossing, five miles downstream. He claims that the accretion of mud began soon after construction of the new bridge started, in 1992. Before that, he used to walk out a mile to fish over rock scoured bare by the tide; now the glutinous sludge is 9ft deep, and would swallow any man trying to cross it.

What has happened – in Philip's view – is that the 40-odd caissons supporting the second bridge have taken the force out of the tides, which rise and fall as much as 40ft and are among the most powerful in the world. The result is that silt is no longer carried past in suspension, but falls out of the slacker water and builds up on the bottom. He is now seeking compensation for the loss of his livelihood from the Department of Transport. The powers-that-be disclaim responsibility, and maintain that the silting of the lake and the approaches to it has been caused by natural shifts in the bed of the river.

Philip is the last of a long line. His grandfather, father and uncle all spent their lives fishing the river, and he himself grew up with no other ambition than to follow in their footsteps.

For centuries salmon have been caught off Oldbury in two forms of trap: putchers – tapering, conical willow baskets set out in tiers across likely stretches of the river – and lave-nets, which resemble giant shrimping nets and are manipulated by individuals standing in the water. Both devices depend on the fact that in the lower reaches of the Severn salmon cannot see, because the water is opaque, full of silt stirred up by the tremendous pull of the tides.

In recent years putcher fishing has declined, with a drop in the numbers of salmon coming up-river. But lave-fishing continued to flourish until recently, especially off Oldbury, in a long, narrow pool a mile out to sea, left behind by every falling tide.

For a stranger, it is fascinating to look out across the glistening, three-mile expanse of the estuary and watch the tide go down. On a cloudy morning everything is a mysterious gunmetal colour – water, sand, mud, sky, all grey – and it needs an expert such as Philip Jones to interpret the changes that steal over the scene.

"See that horseshoe mark coming up?" he says. "That's where the pool is. He'll be up in a moment. See those two pieces of rock starting to show? That's what I call the Haddock. Only they aren't rocks; they're man-made walls, built to keep the fish in."

In the old days Philip would walk out with his lave-net and take up station on one of the Standings – three-tiered stone platforms built for the purpose. The pool, he explains, used to be about 6ft deep for much of its length; fish cut off in it by the ebbing tide would drop back towards the seaward end.

There, finding themselves above a rock shelf, they would turn back upstream, and the lone fisherman, spotting a fin or a track through the water, would lower his net as it came towards him.

Fresh-run fish were prized in local pubs – the Anchor at Oldbury, the Windbound, the Berkeley Arms – and Harvey's restaurant in Bristol prided itself on serving the first Severn salmon of the season.

Now the tradition of Oldbury fishing is gone, buried beneath 25 million tons of blue-grey sludge.

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MED. DOCTOR, 37, blond, male, 187 cms. British/German, currently N.W. of U.K., with interests in travel, music, meditation, culture, world affairs, and more, seeks that some one special with beauty, wisdom, and humour, to discover new horizons, and explore a part of heaven together! Photo appreciated. Box No I:1984.

GIGGLY FEMALE 33 YRS in the waiting, where the bloody hell are you? For theatre, cinema, good food, country walks, dancing, Oxford. photo appreciated. Box No I:2030.

NORTH YORK MOORS. recent immigrant, female, own boots, car, energy, profession, rucksack. Seeks similar male, 50's, to explore the area. Box No I:2031.

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WORKING MAN, young 44, slim, 5'11" tall, independent, shy, likes sport, keeping fit, walking, seeks female around 30 for fulfilling relationship. London/Anywhere. Box No I:2032.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 40, tall, attractive, GSOH, WLTM lady 30-40, n/s, interested in theatre, museums, cycling, watching sunsets, walking & summer picnics. South Hants area. Box No I:2033.

INDEPENDENT, INTERESTING, and active woman, WLTM intelligent, thoughtful, n/s man, 45+. Photo appreciated. Box No I:2034.

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL, N.London women (small group), seek similar men (35-45yrs), for wining & dining, and good humoured conversation. Box No I:2035.

WARM, KIND FEMALE, 38, seeking special man with VGSOH, a kindred spirit to share all life's pleasures. Likes sport, outdoors, food & cinema. S.London. Box No I:2036.

DRIVEN IMPATIENT, loving Aries Male, 43, 6'2", handsome, divorced, 3 kids, MD of Prof. Co. Loves Black Run Skiing, bridge, camping, and hiking. Seeks lively, cultured, gorgeous, n/s Female, 20's or 30's, any nationality. Bristol and surrounds. Box No I:2037.

YOUNG-LOOKING, SINCERE prof. n/s woman 41 enjoys cinema music theatre reading swimming walking foreign langs, WLTM similar outgoing man, 37-46, London. Letter & photo please. Box No I:2038.

F YOUNG 50, enjoys arts & countryside. WLTM warm, life-enhancing, n/s male. Bath. Box No I:2039.

SAGITTARIAN; INDEPENDENT, mid-40's male, GSOH, no ties, eager to explore the gentler side of life, seeks similarly enthusiastic/optimistic lady companion 35+, to share the journey. Box No I:2040.

PROFESSIONAL, WARM-HEARTED woman, 54 yrs old. After a dreary winter in London, WLTM easy-going male, with a zest for life, to share weekend explorations of the city. Lets welcome spring together. Box No I:2041.

GERMAN LADY, PENSIONER, single, and good-looking, would like to meet a single gentleman for sight-seeing, on her next visit to Britain. Photo please. Box No I:2043.

SMILING BRUNETTE, (30-45), not glitzy, invited to join busy but unpretentious Arts Producer (58, beard) at previews. Relax - just good company, laughter and pampering (perhaps). Photograph guarantees reply. Box No I:2044.

YOUNG-RETIRED F, wants to start correspondence f'ship. Someone to share ideas & argue with. Either sex & any age. Box No I:2045.

LIVELY-SPIRITED FEMALE, 30's, seeks kind, calm, cuddly male 40+, for relaxed romance. I like to laugh, talk, eat, cook, read, and enjoy life. (Scotland). Box No I:2046.

IDEALIST POLYMATH seeks 25-60 intellectual, to learn to love & househusband for. Box No I:2047.

NO DODDLE THIS - delineating a dashing doodle designed to divert an intelligent, sensuous, creative woman, into a digression with an appreciative London man, (46, inconspicuously successful, momentarily becalmed by ennui, occasionally amusing, full inventory,) sharing serendipitous meandering, loquacious loafing, wittiness and eventually breakfast - but maybe I won't have to do it again? Box No I:2048.

THOUGHTFUL SENSITIVE WOMAN mid-40's seeks culturally hungry well-adjusted male 45-55 for companionship & fun. Honesty essential. Midlands area. Box No I:2020.

HANTS LADY, 48 YRS OLD, slim, enjoys walks in country, carnival in Rio, warm nights in Bali. WLTM similar gentleman for friendship and whatever. Box No I:2016.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 35, IRISH, sincere, caring, intelligent, likes socialising, travel & cinema. WLTM a female in London, for friendship and romance. Box No I:2017.

MALE, 46, GRADUATE, ded, relaxed, thoughtful, affluent, seeks female for discreet lunches. P.O. Box 47, Kenilworth, CV8 1ZL.

SUCCESSFUL YORKSHIREMAN BSc Hons. Own business, detached house. Rich but unconventional. 5'10", single, 46. Seeks intelligent distinctive looking female for meaningful relationship. Box No I:2014.

MUSICAL, YOUNG 60'S, prof F, linguist, psychology, walks. WLTM good enough M. W.Yorks. Box No I:2013.

PROFESSIONAL FEMALE, 54 yrs old, slim, dark hair, 5'6", articulate, educated, independent, likes travel, Radio 4, cinema, music, literature. Seeks like minded male companion. Exeter. Box No I:2012.

PROF. PETITE, ATTRACT. woman with walking boots, seeks man 40's with 4 wheels and a sense of direction, to explore town & country avenues. London/SE. Box No I:2015.

ACTIVE SEMI-RET. PROF. M:expat. 6ft, slim, age 68 going on 58, lives in even more ancient farmhouse in central Italy. Interests include doing new things, enjoying life in a relaxed kind of way. Seeks friendship and hopefully much more. WLTM caring, intelligent, attractive, mature F, any nationality, who might enjoy prospect of developing partnership, having fun. Photo appreciated. Box No I:2021.

WEATHER-BEATEN WRITER, living like an anchorite on Scottish coast, would like to share hopes, ideas and more with a warm, thoughtful, intelligent woman who enjoys letters. Box No I:2008.

NORMAL, ATTRACTIVE, optimistic woman, Oxford graduate with grown up children, WLTM interesting, affectionate, adventurous man 45+. Box No I:2007.

PROF. ATTRACTIVE CHRISTIAN lady, 38, likes travel, people, talking, art, music, finally has time, would like to meet man, similar age, for friendship/relationship? S.East. Photo appreciated. Box No I:2005.

SENSITIVE PROF. MALE. Minutes away from 40. Tall attractive, GSOH, n/s, seeks lovely female for reciprocal smiles and TLC. East Mids/Anywhere. What are you minutes away from? Box No I:1999.

MALE, 44 YRS OLD, IPSWICH, single, no dependants, computing professional enjoys golf, tennis, gardening, dancing, nature. WLTM pretty lady up to 35 yrs, who has a heart of gold. PA. Box No I:2004.

GAY GUY 47, tall, trim, masculine, romantic, caring, seeks affect. & unattached gent, 60-80, for friendship, possible 1-to-1 rel. Anywhere. Photo please. Box No I:1998.

CAMBS, Young-minded Granny, tactile GSOH WLTM tall 55-60 granded for sharing/caring. Box No I:2000.

TRUE SCORPIO MALE, 37, affectionate, sensitive and emotionally literate. Highly motivated & 100% professional. Seeks equal (slim) woman for commitment. Photo essential. London. Box No I:2003.

GAY PROF. M 40, tall, slim, fit, frisky, bright, easygoing with VGSOH, likes swimming, walking, arts, in general. WLTM guy 30-45 for gen. fun & friendship. Worc'/W.Mids. Photo please. Box No I:2006.

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The joys of parenting

In the final article in her current series, Anna Pavord gives advice on propagating new young plants from past favourites

Propagating plants is a benign kind of disease. It can be kept reasonably under control by a surfeit of children, but it advances unchecked when the number of mouths round the kitchen table starts to dwindle.

The disease is made more dangerous by the fact that most plants, being infinitely more subtle than people, offer more than one way of perpetuating themselves. The exceptions are the annuals, which germinate, grow to their full potential, seed themselves and die within the space of a single season. The only way of propagating them is by sowing seed.

But with other plants, you can choose whether you sow seed, divide plants up, take cuttings, or make layers – which is a lazy kind of cutting. The method you choose depends on the end result that you are looking for.

The point about cuttings is that each one will grow into a perfect replica of its parent – if that is what you want. Nurserymen depend on this sameness. But each seed in a seed pod may turn out to be a subtle variation of the parent, since the progeny sometimes skip back, as children do, to pick up a trait that has been suppressed for several generations.

The variation is a safety device. A flower that has a slightly different shape or colour from that of its parent may be more successful at attracting pollinating insects. A leaf that grows narrow, or develops a woolly texture, may survive drought more easily. Plants subscribe to the harsh doctrine of survival of the fittest. But gardeners intervene, selecting sickly seedlings to grow on, for the sake of a rare mutation in the flower, or a variegation on a leaf, that has nothing to do with survival.

The seed-sowing season gets into its stride about now, though you should never be in too much of a hurry to sow seed of annuals or tender bedding plants. Many trials have shown that seed sown in April catches up fast with seed sown in March.

Use small pots for initial sowings, two-thirds filled with compost, topped up with vermiculite. Water the pots from above with a fine rose before sowing. Soaking pots in water can mean that the compost gets waterlogged. Scatter seed over the surface of the vermiculite. Very fine seed will not need covering. Larger seeds can be gently stirred into the surface of the vermiculite.

Cover the pots with glass or cling film, and then with newspaper to exclude light – though some seeds, including ageratum, antirrhinum, begonia, cineraria, impatiens, lobelia, mimulus, nicotiana, petunia and salvia, germinate best in light and should not be covered. As soon as the seedlings emerge, remove the covers and keep the pots well watered.

Prick off the seedlings into large seed trays as soon as the first real leaves develop. Very small seedlings such as alyssum and lobelia can be pricked out in small clumps. Harden off the plants gradually before planting them out in permanent positions. In balmy coastal areas, this may be in mid-April. In central Scotland, it is unlikely to be a good idea to do it before June.

> ‘Plants, being infinitely more subtle than people, offer more than one way of reproducing themselves’

Cuttings of plants can be taken at three different stages. Softwood cuttings are those taken from young shoots between March and June. In some ways they are the most difficult to look after, as they often need mist and warmth before they will root, and they need to root fast before they exhaust their own food supplies. The exceptions are geranium and fuchsia, both of which root very easily from softwood cuttings. This system also works with cotinus, lilac, lavender and potentilla.

Fuchsia cuttings taken now will themselves be flowering plants by late summer. Take shoots with three pairs of leaves, cutting just below the last pair of leaves. Set them in a pot filled with fast-draining compost. Cover with a polythene bag and keep at a temperature between 50F and 60F. Move the cuttings into separate pots when their own growth shows that they have rooted.

Cut old, overwintered geranium plants hard back in early spring. Water and feed them to encourage new shoots, which will provide softwood cuttings. Any healthy shoot, about 3-4 in long, will make a cutting. Snap it off just below a leaf joint. Take off all the leaves except the very young ones at the tip of the cutting. Set the cuttings round the edge of a 5-in pot of compost. Do not cover them. Pot them on when they are rooted.

Semi-ripe cuttings are the ones you take when the current season's shoots are just beginning to harden, but are still pliable (generally between mid-June and August). The shoots must be healthy and vigorous. Simple stem cuttings can be snipped in 4-in or 6-in lengths from any likely-looking section of stem. Internodal cuttings are made by cutting half-way between leaf joints on a stem.

Nodal cuttings are made through the bump immediately below a leaf joint. You then whip off the bottom leaves attached to the lump before putting the cutting into its pot.

Hibiscus roots well from stem cuttings, taken at the end of July or August. Take 6-in sections of stem and line them out in sandy soil in a cold frame, where they have some winter protection. Try the technique with hydrangeas, too, by taking 4-in sections of semi-ripe wood and sticking them round the side of a pot of compost. Cover the pot with a plastic bag until the cuttings have found their feet.

A heel cutting is what you get when you take hold of a side shoot (not one that is flowering) and give it a sharp tug downwards. It comes away with a bit of the old stem attached. That is the "heel". Both buddleia and chaenomeles root from heel cuttings, taken in late July or August. Choose plump lateral shoots 4in or 5in long, and pull them off with a heel. Trim off the growing top and the bottom leaves and put the cuttings into a cold frame, pushing them into the ground to about half their length.

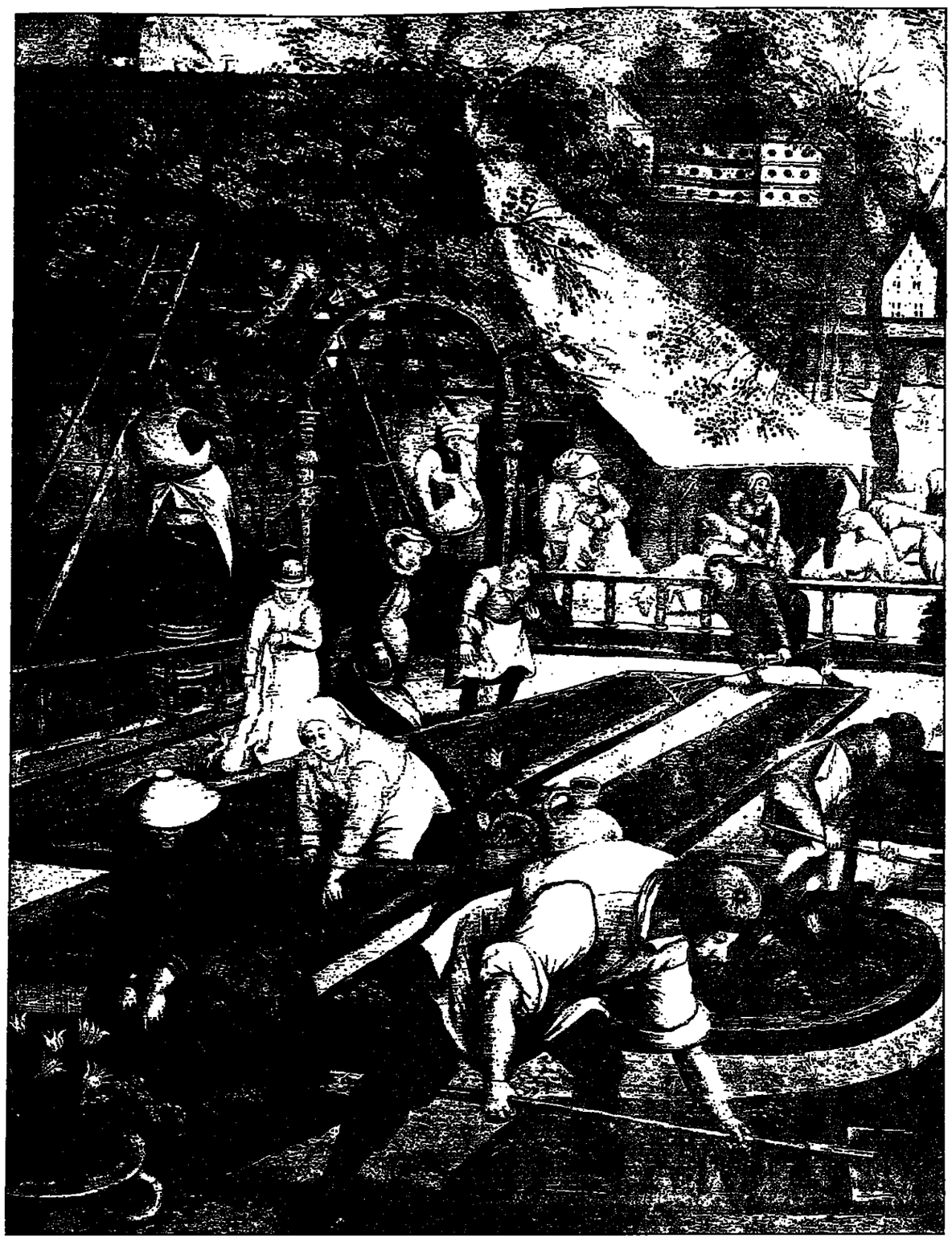
A basal cutting is one made with a clean cut through the slight swelling that usually occurs where side shoots join the main stem. This is all that distinguishes it from a heel cutting.

Basal cuttings of choisya taken in late July or August will root in pots covered with a plastic bag or (in mild districts) lined out direct in the ground. A propagating frame set at about 60 F will hurry up the rooting process of shrubs such as choisya and ceanothus, but is not essential.

The older the wood you take for cuttings, the longer the cutting itself is, and the longer it takes to root, so hardwood cuttings, taken from the ripened wood of a shrub or tree in autumn and early winter, sometimes take a year to root. Many common shrubs such as berberis, dogwood, cotoneaster, escallonia, privet and ribes root from hardwood cuttings.

A layer is a kind of hardwood cutting, with the added advantage that if it doesn't take, the evidence isn't so obvious. Shrubs with naturally low-growing branches are the easiest targets. Rhododendrons and azaleas propagate particularly well by this method, and I have also had 100 per cent success with *Hydrangea villosa*.

When you notice a likely branch for layering, snick the underside of it about a foot back from the growing tip. Scrape out a hollow in the ground underneath this point and peg the stem down into it. Cover it with earth and put a flat stone on top of it to stop it springing free. A year later, the stem should have rooted. To free it, simply cut the stem behind the layer.



Spring, by Flemish painter Abel Grimmer (1570-1619) MUSEE DES BEAUX ARTS, LILLE ET ARCHIVE

CUTTINGS

Flower of the hour: *Crocus tommasinianus*, the mauve-purple crocus that grows wild on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, in Bosnia and Serbia. It is one of the earliest of the easy members of the crocus tribe to flower in the garden and it establishes and increases without much effort on the part of the gardener. The narrow, furled buds continue their performance well into March. It was named by the Dean of Manchester, the Rev William Herbert, after his botanising friend, Signor Tommasini of Trieste. Selected forms such as 'Whitewell Purple' and 'Barr's Purple' have darker, richer flowers than the norm. Use them in grass and scatter them under deciduous shrubs.

In the middle of the 17th century, the Count of Nassau returned from the exile imposed by the 30 Years War, and started to restore his castle at Idstein, near Frankfurt. He also laid out a garden, full of rare plants and flowers – lilies, roses, hollyhocks, anemones, tulips. When the garden was established, he commissioned the painter Johann Walther of Strasbourg to record all his best and rarest plants. The paintings have been gathered in a charming book which deserves a better title than *So Many Sweet Flowers* – even if that is a contemporary quotation. The collection (Pavilion, £16.99) has a foreword by Gill Saunders, of the V&A's department of prints and drawings, and are accompanied by extracts from the manuscript prepared originally for the Count of Nassau, and by quotations from other writers of the time. It is a delight.

Sad news for clematis lovers. Keith and Carol Fair of the Valley Clematis Nursery have decided that this will be their last season. "We want to enjoy some of the other pleasures of life before we get too decrepit," explains Mr Fair. I have found their mail order service one of the best in the business, with plants vigorously grown and beautifully packed. In a special clearance sale, they are offering four of their plants for the price of three. The offer extends only to plants available in March: 14 large-flowered hybrids, including 'Comtesse de Bouchard' and 'Rouge Cardinal', nine different montana types, four different viticellas and the herbaceous clematis 'Petit Faucon' and C jouiana 'Praecox'. The Valley Clematis Nursery, Willinghan Road, Hainton, Lincoln LN3 6LN (01507 313398).

The Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock Garden Club are holding a show today (12pm-4.30, admission £1) at the Lancaster and Morecambe College of Further Education, Morecambe Road, Lancaster. On display are primulas, cyclamen, soldanellas, fritillaries, saxifrages and sempervivums.

The Hazel Revolution, a one-day conference on managing hazel coppice, will be held at West Dean College, near Chichester, West Sussex on Tuesday 25 March (9.15am-4.30pm). It is organised by the Wessex Coppice Group and the Timber Growers Association, and will look at the new markets that have opened up for hazel products over the last two years and examine ways of meeting the demand. The cost is £39. (Linda Glynn, Wessex Coppice Group, 01962 772030).

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Irish isles are smiling

The 'hope chest' of the Aran Islanders is sustained by tourism. By Jeremy Seal

At the Church of St Brigid and St Oliver Plunkett on the big Aran island of Inishmore, a gentle priest delivered the sermon at Easter morning mass in a soft torrent of Irish. Only a few words were recognisable, but they were the significant ones – "Boston, Massachusetts" ... "Arsenal, London" ... and even "Tokyo, Japan" – indexing the distant places where Aran Islanders have been forced to make their homes.

On the three Aran Islands, slung like a necklace across Galway Bay, emigration has long been accepted as coming with the territory – a few square miles of unyielding fields battered by widow-making, increasingly fished-out seas. As the resident population falls below 1,500, however, rapidly increasing numbers of visitors or "blow-ins" are discovering these haunting, treeless bastions of Irishness swathed in Celtic lore and littered with ancient fortresses and early Christian sites. Tourism is being seen as turning the tide of emigration; islanders take to easy trades running bike-hire shops, B&Bs and tour buses to Dun Aengus, the great clifftop fortress that is the islands' best-known attraction. In the main settlement of Kilronan, on Inishmore, where the ferries drop some 2,000 day-trippers daily in the height of the season, snack bars with names like The Ould Pier are burgeoning.

Inishmore and Inisheer are well served by their respective mainland ports, Rossaveal in Connemara and Doolin in County Clare. But three-mile-long Inishmaan, the remote "Middle Island", has always looked askance on the outside world. At the island's quay, poignantly named An Cora or "hope chest", after the luggage of those embarked on long-term travels, families were standing by their ageing tractors to await relatives as they came ashore laden with mainland booty – tins of everything from paint to Ovaltine, planks of fresh wood, rolls of roofing felt and loo paper. They disappeared in a gloriously motley convoy down the one road, a nibbled ribbon of tarmac dividing a patchwork of tiny fields hemmed by immaculate dry-limestone walls.

We passed a few beached currachs, traditional longboats with tar-covered canvas hulls, and followed a sign across the fields to Cregmore, Angela Faherty's B&B. Angela, from County Roscommon, met her Inishmaan husband in Boston and moved to the island 20 years ago. "Oh, we get a few visitors," explained Angela. "Mostly, it's anthropologists and film crews; just now there's a lot from Germany filming up at Rory Concannon's, the island's last surviving currach maker. The islanders want to keep it this way; they don't want day trippers like they get on the other islands."

As the Inishmaan community flirts with terminal collapse (just 20 children attend the island school), the people talk of developing "cultural tourism", but not with any great conviction. In the meantime, the island remains a place apart – even by Aran standards – as we discovered when we explored it the next morning. Those extraordinary walls parcel up the entire island into small fields that each sustain a single cow, and contain a sloping stone ramp the size of a double bed that feeds rainwater into the trough at its foot. In one field a woman wearing a colourful patterned shawl characteristic of the island crouched over a calf that had been born in the night, murmuring softly to it. The fields gave out at limestone terraces, freakishly flat and sea-swept clean, bar the odd perfect rectangle of rock the size of a car that some unimaginable storm had dumped there. These in turn gave way to sheer cliffs that threw up columns of spume while seals bobbed far below, their heads looking like tarred footballs.

The path led to Synge's Chair, a stone bivouac amidst a moonscape geology, where the playwright J M Synge used to come at the turn of the century to take his ease during protracted stays on the island. An old sign pointed to the house in the centre of the island where Synge produced some of his greatest works. Where an interpretation centre would have been long established on the other islands, here weeds poked from a dilapidated thatch above dirty, locked rooms housing an assortment of junk. The effect was unintentionally atmospheric, and spoke volumes for Inishmaan attitudes towards the outside world, and perhaps to the blow-in playwright himself.

In the cosy village pub, a fire was burning. Locals were lining up Easter Saturday pints of Guinness beneath decorations that had been up since Christmas (and probably not the most recent one).

Inishmaan isolation: a patchwork of tiny fields hemmed by immaculate dry-limestone walls PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER HILL PHOTOGRAPHIC

A quarter-hour walk brought us through the lanes in from Faherty's B&B to the island's airport. The airport building was locked and we sat among a buzz of insects as rabbits nibbled at the runway where a sign featuring an (unlikely) airliner warned off the unwary. Then the airport came to life as plane and staff appeared all at once from different directions: a nine-seater Britten Norman Islander, the airport's fire officer, who turned out to be Angela Faherty's husband, and the elderly man who trebled as air traffic control, ticket issuer and check-in, which meant weighing passengers as well as baggage on a pair of bathroom scales. Once aboard, we skimmed low across Gregory's Sound to Inishmore, with the sea showing aquamarine beneath us: on the beach, figures were forking seaweed into trailers to be used as fertiliser on kitchen gardens.

Three minutes after take-off, we touched down at Inishmore, from where a battered Transit van ferried passengers into town. In Joe Mac's pub in Kilronan, Sean the ferry skipper joined us for a pint of Guinness. He arrived as a blow-in six years ago and was now bringing up two children on the island. Sean accepted that tourism was having its effect, but did not doubt that it would take more than a few chip shops to spoil the magic of the islands. He remembered how he had been greeted with the funniest of looks by the other skippers when he first arrived, until one of them put him right. "You trying to drown the lot of us?" the skipper asked him. "You keep turning your boat agin the sun." As Sean explained, it was considered extremely bad luck to turn the boat to the east, against the direction of the sun.

"It can get busy in the summer," he admitted. "But the crush is very concentrated. If you avoid the middle of Kilronan and the road up to Dun Aengus, you won't see anybody." We hired bikes and, sure enough, at the other end of the island, we had all to ourselves the undisturbed ruins that litter these islands.

Like the more famous Dun Aengus further west, Dun Ducathair, the "black fort", was a great semicircular fortification perched on a clifftop above the sea and protected on the land side by upright, angled stones, or *chevaux de frise*. Bicycling on, we passed the old stone memorials to the sea dead that line the road around the village of Killeany, and made our way up the track to the ruins of a tiny seventh-century oratory dedicated to St Benan. The views were stunning. Inisheer appeared in the distance beyond Inishmaan, and we could see Sean's ferry leaving Kilronan for the mainland. As we watched him leave port and swing the boat round to the west, we could almost hear Aran skippers everywhere breathing a collective sigh of relief.

The best source of information on the Aran Islands is the Galway office of the Irish Tourist Board: call 00 353 91 563081.

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An A to Z of the British

Simon Calder twins towns to view options for 'grandes vacances'

The French feelgood factor *est arrivé*. Liberated by cheap francs and low fares, millions of British travellers are making plans for crossing the Channel this spring and summer.

Yet when you start planning a trip, the complexity of planes and boats, trains and tunnels proves baffling. So to show you how to get from A to B, *moins cher*, *The Independent* has created a unique A-Z of ways to reach destinations all over France. Some of the methods help you to take advantage of brand-new (or yet-to-be-introduced) services, while others will simply save you money.

All fares shown are returns, and include applicable taxes. They are quotes obtained anonymously by telephone researchers on Thursday and Friday this week. Company contacts are given opposite.

Aberdeen to Antibes
Strange but true: Luton is the new gateway to Europe. Low-cost airlines such as Debonair and easyJet have turned the Bedfordshire airport into an important air hub, especially for Aberdonian sun-seekers. A flight connection at Luton on easyJet can get you to Nice for £168.40 return. The good news is that Nice airport is just a 10-minute cab ride from Antibes. The not-quite-so-terrific news is that the flight schedules mean you must spend a night in Luton in each direction.

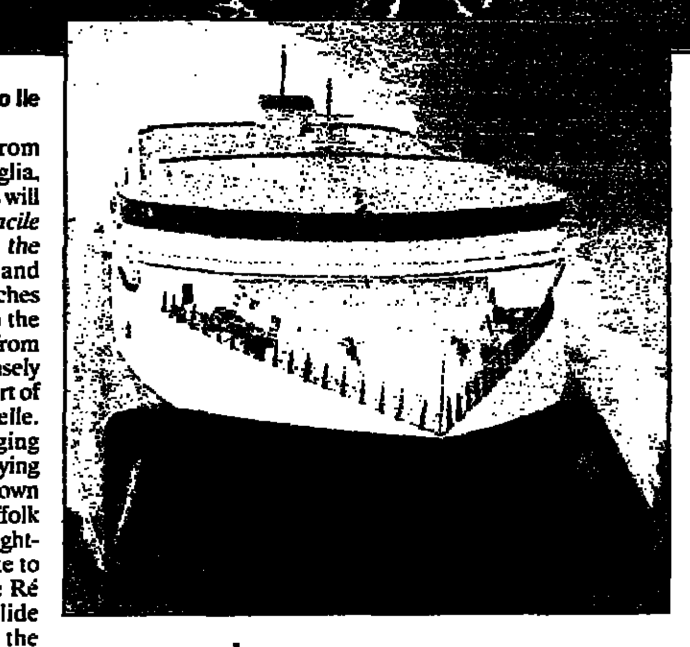
Birmingham to Bordeaux
The global HQ of National Express coaches are in Birmingham, so not surprisingly there is a good deal by bus to from the Midlands to the Médoc. The bus company will get you to Victoria Coach Station in under three hours for a modest £12; then Eurolines has a direct overnight service to Bordeaux for £99, allowing you to compare the 17th-century Rue du Loup with the 20th-century Bullring.

Cardiff to Charles de Gaulle
BA 7805, one of the more wayward flights in the British Airways timetable, wafts from Aberdeen to Paris by way of Belfast City and Cardiff-Wales airports. If you buy a World Offer ticket from Cardiff to Charles de Gaulle by 26 March it will cost £116.40 – only a fiver more than the first class train to London. It is tricky to make a case for the main Paris airport being a destination in its own right, but the sturdy old aerodrome of Le Bourget – halfway into Paris – houses one of the great unsung museums, devoted to Air and Space.

Dover to Dunkerque
The Sealink between these two ports has been broken. Instead, nip up the Kent coast to Ramsgate and take the new Holyman Sally fast ferry to Dunkerque. Starting on 15 May, the Australian-made catamaran is scheduled to take 75 minutes. A car plus five people costs £151 for any length of stay on selected sailings all year (with restrictions on Friday and Saturday departures in July and August).

Edinburgh to Epernay
In theory, this trip is easy. The Rail Shop's brochure boasts of through trains from Britain's cities to Paris this summer, as it did last year, but the promise has yet to be kept. There is some hope that direct Eurostar trains from Edinburgh and Glasgow via the East Coast main line will finally begin in June. Timings and fares for the through trains to Paris have yet to be calculated, but expect an introductory offer of £99 – with a journey time of eight hours from Edinburgh. Bolt on £10 and 75 minutes each way to Epernay; you can reach the maison of Moët with just a five-minute walk between Gares du Nord and de l'Est in Paris.

Folkestone to Foix
Few ferries serve Folkestone's handsome harbour any more. Instead, burrow beneath the Channel on Le Shuttle. Pack your car with up to eight other people, and you all get to Calais in 35 minutes for £149 in April or May. To reach the fine town of Foix in the Pyrenean foothills involves a drive of 1,000km (625 miles), possibly arduous with nine in a car. Still, the A20 through France, speeding the journey south, is being improved faster than is the A20 through Folkestone.



New high-speed catamarans (below left) save time across the Channel, but do not permit travellers to sample the bracing sea air on deck (left). MAIN PICTURE: HULTON GETTY

Glasgow to Grenoble
Go from the Clyde to the Alps via Essex. At the end of this month, Flightline begins operating flights from Stansted to Geneva: tickets are being sold through Plus Travel for £122 return through the summer. Bolt on a Ryanair return from Prestwick to Stansted for £70, including a rail ticket from Glasgow Central or any other Scottish station, and you will be within 60 miles of Grenoble. But with the pound having appreciated even more against the Swiss franc than *vis-a-vis* the French currency, perhaps you'd best *rester* in Geneva.

Huddersfield to Honfleur
A "supersaver" rail ticket from the West Yorkshire town to Portsmouth costs a whacking £56.50 – more than many Channel crossings with a car at this time of year. Without special offers, P&O's Portsmouth-Le Havre ferry costs a modest £20 for foot passengers if you take a midweek daytime sailing. You need not actually arrive on foot: the ferry company will let you take your bike free on the boat. Hope for a favourable breeze for the ride across the mouth of the Seine to the still-pretty fishing village.

Ipswich to Ile de Ré
Even from East Anglia, motorists will find it *facile* to reach the small island that launches itself into the Atlantic from the intensely serene port of La Rochelle. A voyaging seagull, flying directly down from Suffolk on a straight-line route to the Ile de Ré would glide above the harbour of Newhaven. From here, a high-speed Stena ship will whisk terrestrial travellers across to Dieppe in a couple of hours for £48, for a five-day, two-person trip. Migrating gulls and drivers would both do well to avoid Paris en route to the silvery island of sand dunes and marshes, speckled with a few trees. The terrain, you may conclude, is remarkably similar to Suffolk, but the coast is punctuated with a few more nudist beaches.

Jarrow to Juan les Pins
Tynesiders should travel to the Côte d'Azur by way of Brussels. The official advice from the *Official Airlines Guide* is to take the Metro from Jarrow to Newcastle airport, fly on Sabena to the Belgian capital, then take a flight to Marseilles – from where fast, frequent trains shuttle along to Juan les Pins. Local discount agents such as Dawson & Sanderson (0191-257 1777) can get you there and back for £222.

Kidderminster to Kayserberg
To travel from the carpet capital of Worcestershire to the village whose biggest boast is as the birthplace of Albert Schweitzer is, surprisingly, a piece of *patisserie*: take a train to Birmingham airport to connect with the Crossair flight to Basel (£217). Basel, of course, is a Swiss city. But a geo-political wrinkle places its airport firmly on the French side of the border, with a land corridor to the Swiss city that gives it the name. When you leave the airport, you choose whether to enter French or Swiss territory. Choose France, take the bus into Mulhouse and a train onwards to Colmar; Kayserberg is on the outskirts.

Luton to Le Touquet
Thameslink takes you via Blackfriars to Bromley South, where you find bus 320 to Biggin Hill International Airport. The Kent airport's sole scheduled service is on Love Air to Le Touquet, fare £135. After a short hop, walk from the airport to the geriatrically glamorous resort in 15 minutes.

Manchester to Menton
A British Airways Boeing 737 has flown between Manchester and Nice for many summers. But this year, the flight has turned into a charter. When BA decided to cut the link to the south of France, the tour operator Unijet took it over. So starting on May 24, Mancunian rugby fans can make tracks to Menton easily for £219; just take the train from Nice to the final resting place of William Webb Ellis, who departed for the great scrum in the sky from Menton.

Newcastle to Nancy
Brussels intervenes again for Tyneside travellers to Lorraine. Hull to Zeebrugge on P&O North Sea Ferries (£106 for a car and driver for five nights) cuts out much of the motoring, and provides free motorway driving through Belgium and Luxembourg – tolls begin only at the French frontier.

Oxford to Orléans
The Thames to the Loire is mostly navigable by water, but hitching could be quicker. Students who don't mind a slow getaway should thumb along the M40, swerve around London on the M25 and continue to Folkestone on the M20. A "Paris, please" sign will earn you blank looks or derision, but could get you a free ride through the Channel Tunnel and on to the French capital. The patience of a saint such as Joan of Arc will help on the hitcher's graveyard that is the Boulevard Périphérique, but you might manage to thumb from Oxford to Orléans for £0.

Pimlico to Paris
Apart from hitching, the lowest fare remains Hoverspeed's £27 bus fare from Victoria (a short walk from Pimlico) to the Gare du Nord. You arrive later than Eurostar folk, but richer. Don't forget your passport.

Queen's Park to Quimper
If, instead, your bedsit is in London NW6, take the tube four stops to Paddington. The Golden Hind Pullman gets you to Plymouth, and the overnight Britanny ferry (£66 per person in a two-berth) to Roscoff. By dawn you are in Britanny; even with the uncertainties of *transports ruraux* you should make Quimper by elevenses. In the city that boasts a Musée de la Crêpe, celebrate with a pancake as mid-morning snack.

Reigate to Rennes
Air France has cut many of its services from Britain, leaving only Paris and Strasbourg. But the range of regional destinations on other airlines is still wide – especially to Britanny. Bus 727 from Reigate deposits you at Gatwick, with departures to Brest, Nantes or Rennes on Brit air for £142.50

Sheffield to Strasbourg
Would you believe you can fly from Sheffield to Strasbourg? Didn't think so, especially since South Yorkshire has no airport. But head along to Humberside for Air UK's departure to Amsterdam and a connection on KLM to the home of the European parliament. Steel yourself for the fare: £220.

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invasion of France, 1997

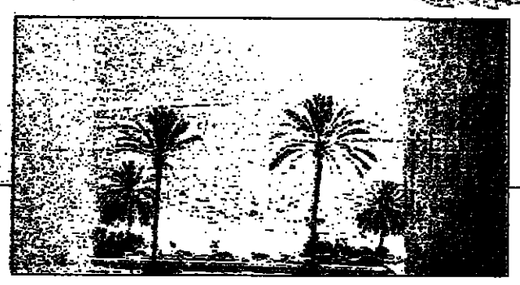
GRAPHIC: KRISTINA FERRIS

Breton culture: by plane, boat or train

Cheap francs and low fares are triggering the biggest invasion from Britain since the war ended (above)

Direct trains from Edinburgh to Paris are due to start in summer – three years late. Celebrate the first Scotland to France trains in Epernay

PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK EAGAR



Farewell Manchester, *bonjour* Menton PHOTO: S CALDER

From the provinces to Provence; a week may be a long time in Aberdeen, but it's no time in Antibes

Tamworth to Tours
Reports of the demise of the shipping industry at the hands of the Channel Tunnel are exaggerated. The straight-line school of motoring directs you to the Britanny Ferries link from Portsmouth to Caen (well, Ouistreham, nine miles north). If you hold the course steady, the journey south to the Loire even takes you down the back straight of the Le Mans racing circuit, masquerading as the E502. In July, you plus up to four co-drivers and a car can get across the Channel for £140.

Upminster to Uzes
Upminster, with its 900-year-old church and medieval tithe barn, has almost as much history as the old hilltop town of Uzes. But while the medieval French settlement forms a neat triangle with Nîmes and Avignon, Upminster loiters alongside Dagenham and Romford. Still, Heathrow is only a £3.20 tube ride away. Air France's "hub and spoke" system to provincial France involves a tiresome bus transfer between Paris airports, but with persistence Avignon is accessible for £178.60.

Virginia Water to Vincennes
Eurostar may still be recovering from the Channel Tunnel fire – and Waterloo from this week's electrical blaze – but the fixed link between England and France is still the best bet from the Home Counties to the Ile de France. Reckless travellers will allow three minutes to connect at Waterloo from South West Trains to Eurostar (not counting the 20 minute check-in). Use the direct Disneyland service (£79), and transfer magically at the Royaume Enchanté to RER line A to the Chateau de Vincennes – no messing around on the Metro.

Watford to Wimereux
For destinations in the Boulogne *banlieue*, Hoverspeed is the best bet – its Sea-Cat purrs across from Folkestone in 55 minutes. A day return by train from Watford Junction to Folkestone costs £18.10, and if you catch the current Cat's special offer (until the end of April) you can reach Boulogne for the day for just £2. The bus from Boulogne takes 20 minutes for a modest 7F, to reach Wimereux, four miles north. This winningly friendly resort, with a prim *fin-de-siècle* promenade, is still woefully overlooked by daytrippers.

Exeter to Aix
You don't have to be a planespotter to enjoy this journey, but it helps. The morning departure from Devon to Jersey on a Shorts 360 gives you plenty of time to connect with the departure to Paris (and, indeed, the chance to see a good portion of Jersey while you wait for the flight to the French capital). A De Havilland Dash 8 dashes you to Charles de Gaulle, where you face another long wait for an Airbus A320 to Lyon. The airport is on the TGV high-speed line to the south, so you can complete the trip by land at velocities almost as fast as some of the planes used for this tortuous trip. British Airways' long-suffering fares unit computes a price of £260.50 to Lyon, with the change out of £300 getting you the rest of the way to Aix-en-Provence.

Yeovil to Yerville
By this stage in the alphabet, you will have collected almost every crossing on the Channel. The misnamed Britanny ferry from Poole to Cherbourg costs £80 for a five-person, five-day trip, leaving you to lope through Normandy to this placid *ville*.

Zennor to Zonza
From one extreme in England to a far-flung corner of France. Zennor is a village near Land's End. Zonza a hamlet north of Porto-Vecchio in Corsica. A land journey, using ferries where necessary, covers 1,000 miles. In contrast, St Ives is but three tempting miles away.

Cross-Channel contacts
Air UK: 0345 666777
Brit air: 01293 502044
British Airways: 0345 222111
British Rail International: 0171-834 2345
Brittany Ferries: 0990 360360
Crossair: 0171-434 7300
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None of the numbers above is a premium-rate service – but to call the French tourist office in London, on 0891 244123, you pay 50 pence per minute.

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Under the Counter

Chic to cheek

I'm seriously thinking of investing in a pair of very dark glasses in order to survive the next few months. Harmful UV rays I can cope with, but there is one sight which everyone should be protected from. Summed up in three little letters, it is the summer sin: VPL.

VPL, or "visible panty line", is a phenomenon that appears as soon as spring has sprung. It rises with the sap at the merest blink of sunshine. It manifests itself most commonly at weddings, office parties, and even on prime-time television. A recent *Blind Date* contestant was a textbook example. The lovely lad may not have liked the cut of her jib, but most of Britain saw the cut of her knicks as she waddled up Cilla's stairs to the losers' dressing room. His relief at not picking her, was palpable – so was mine.

I have no sympathy for anyone suffering from VPL. This is, after all, a self-imposed affliction. Don't these people look in the mirror? Or is it the fault of complacent/well meaning/scared partners, who to the much-voiced "I look fat in this, don't I?", reply "of course you don't, my darling", every time.

I have never been a fan of squeeze-me-quick Lycra below the waist, so VPL was not a personal challenge – that is, until this year's January sales, when I fell for a pair of skin-tight, indigo, boot-cut Sportmax trousers. They were reduced from £169 to £53, so I just had to have them. The assistant rather cunningly reassured me that no, I didn't look fat in them and yes, they were supposed to be that tight; and she had processed my Visa card and lovingly wrapped my brand-new purchase in tissue, before I'd even had time to consider my panty line options.

The ensuing evening gave me a new complex to mix and match with my new trews. I spent a great deal of time in Hennes, selecting a suitable, fine g-string with which to slide into this Lycra garment, and, as this shop is such incredible value, was forced to buy a slinky Wonderbra-style bikini as well. Tops and bottoms are sold separately, so I thought, what the hell, I'll get some g-string bottoms while I'm at it – nice to have a sun-kissed behind.

I thought my other half would have been unable to contain himself, as I gave him a pre-bedtime fashion show. But when it came to the (Pamela-Anderson-eat-your-heart-out) g-string bikini, he hesitated, then shook his head, saying no, this was really 18-year-old-waif gear. I haven't yet got over the fact that he doesn't think I possess the body of an 18-year-old waif. At least I can wear my g-string under my Sportmax boot-legs, and strip off to reveal it in the gym locker-room, in the certain knowledge that most of the fat old birds in there would turn up to board meetings wearing only this piece of dental floss, if they had buttocks like mine.

There is no excuse for revealing your panty line to the world. There are solutions – be they g-strings, trouser briefs, control-top tights, or simply no knickers at all. Before you RSVP to your VIP party, get to the mirror ASAP, and check out that VPL. In case there is any doubt, your reflected rear should remind you of two smooth Cox's orange pippins, not a beach ball tied tightly with string.

Smoothies to get intimate with: LOGG microfibre g-string, £4.99, from H&M (Hennes), 261-271 Regent Street, London W1; Lycra and polyester "trouser knickers" with minimiser knicker-line and seam-free rear, £7, from Marks & Spencer.

Lindsay Calder

Go on, cook it yourself

Help is at hand for the lazy: fast food need no longer be depressing, writes Caroline Singer

It's no secret that, while our appetite for cookery programmes and glossy recipe books is at an all-time high, as a nation we are cooking less and less. TV chefs entertain more than they inform, and the inevitable books-of-the-series end up as coffee table décor. Part of the fascination of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's *TV Dinners* is that he's managed to find real people who take time to concoct complicated gourmet meals in their own homes. But for the vast majority, where cooking's concerned, it's often less hassle just to watch.

Food companies know this only too well. Even if we do like to cook "proper" meals, there's not always time. Arriving home exhausted and hungry rarely induces a burning desire to spend the evening slicing, dicing and marinading, so convenience food is a fact of life. But the "ping" of a microwave is a depressing sound. Few would say, hand on heart, that scalding hot, oversalted sludge sliding out of a plastic tub is their idea of a treat, and there is that slightly sheepish feeling that comes with eating something so far removed from the hands-on experience – are all those lovely Le Creuset pots just for decoration?

This is where CIY – "cook it yourself" makes its grand entrance. It takes away the hassle of preparation and planning without removing the sense of cooking a proper, balanced meal from scratch. Bigham's Global Gastronomy, which is pioneering the concept, seems to be carving a new niche in the packaged food market. The idea is simple. You are given the raw ingredients in separate sachets, all chopped, marinaded and ready to use. By following the instructions you can have a plate of gourmet food in 20 minutes flat.

Breast of chicken in a spicy Cajun marinade with a mango and coriander salsa, and sautéed Scottish venison with mustard, honey and juniper in a cranberry and fresh thyme sauce, are just two of the meals that can be whipped up. Nothing is pre-cooked, defrosted from frozen or pumped with preservatives. There's no waste, no shopping around for cranberries and creamed coconut, and emphatically no white plastic tubs with "pierce here" on their lids. This is real food, made easy.

Out of the frying pan: gourmet food in twenty minutes flat PHOTOGRAPH ANDREW BUURMAN

Charlie Bigham, an ex-art consultant and self-confessed foodie, is the brains behind Bigham's Global Gastronomy. He is enthusiastic about the concept, which, he says "came to me as I negotiated the Iran/Pakistan border". The "global" element is inspired by his expeditions to far-flung regions of the world. "I saw simple, delicious food being cooked up with the minimum of fuss on the streets," he recalls, "and I wanted to try to capture some of the convenience and freshness of this type of cooking, and remove some of the mystique that surrounds, say, a Caribbean dish."

Charlie believes that the great strength of English cuisine is its eclecticism. "Unlike countries with a country culinary tradition, such as France or Italy, we have no sacred cows here any more, which is very refreshing. An Italian chef would never think of using Thai spices and coconut, whereas over here, people like Alastair Little never stop experimenting and combining the flavours of other cultures."

It all sounds wonderful, but how does it taste? I decided to invite a few carnivorous friends for Bangkok chicken in south-east Asian spices with coconut and cashew sauce, and sautéed Scottish venison and zesty Caribbean lamb in a lime and ginger marinade (vegetarian options are in the pipeline). It certainly seemed to be food I would happily serve to guests at a dinner party, as well as being something I could treat myself to on a Monday night in front of the telly. And maybe, for once, I wouldn't emerge from the kitchen hot, irritable and bothered, trailing the faint smell of singed martyr.

Practicalities first. The stylish brown cardboard packs come in single or double portions, and meals work out at around £5 a head. They keep for up to a week in the fridge, and I noticed – eco-skinflint that I am – that the little plastic sauce pots are just about strong enough to re-use. There are four separate components to each of the gastronomic self-assembly kits: a bag of rice or new potatoes; a bag of carrots; peeled and batoned leeks, chopped, or green beans topped and tailed; a pot of sauce; and a pouch of marinaded chunks of meat. Plus a page of instructions.

I began cooking about an hour before my guests were due to arrive. As we would be trying out three different dishes, a little planning was required, but next time I'll serve just one variety, giving me time to make a crème brûlée, wax my legs, watch *EastEnders* and greet my guests with a serene smile.

Timing is crucial element to cooking, and Global Gastronomy takes all the guesswork out of it. The instructions that come with each pack are so easy to follow that I almost felt lost when I had to put the cheese and biscuits out without friendly advice. They tell you exactly when to put the rice on for it to be ready just as the meat has cooked through and the carrots are at their peak of *al dente* perfection. The smells are quite wonderful.

And the flavours are even better. The meat was uniformly tender and beautifully marinaded. I have never bitten into a piece of British lamb and tasted lime and ginger before, but it was an inspired and inspiring combination, which I plan to do again. The coconut and cashew sauce was aromatic, sweet and creamy, while the chicken itself had a hint of spice that balanced the flavours perfectly. The mustardy venison was, again, extremely tender, although some felt the marinade was a little too peppery.

Opinions were divided as to which was the best dish. I think the Bangkok Chicken won, but only just; the other two meals had strong support, too, and we all felt we had eaten inventive, interesting, high-quality food that was light years away from anything we'd had out of a packet before. Global Gastronomy meals are outstanding value, and a welcome addition to the otherwise gloomy world of instant grub. I look forward to the vegetarian options, and to seeing the distribution go nationwide, which it is set to do in the near future.

Finally, a last word for those purists who like to feel they've worked hard for their dinner party: with "cook it yourself" there's still the washing up to do. Global Gastronomy may be short-cut cooking, but what a wonderful way to cheat.

Bighams Global Gastronomy is available from quality delis, Harvey Nichols, Fortnum and Mason, Partridges and Cullens. It is also available (from April) from Waitrose supermarkets and the home delivery supermarket The Food Ferry (0171-498 0827). The cost of a meal for one varies between £4.95 at Cullens and £5.50 at Harvey Nichols. A meal for two costs between £7.95 in Cullens and £8.95 in Harvey Nichols. Further information: call or fax Charlie Bigham (0181-357 2530) or Caroline Singer (0181-579 1082).

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If you really wanna put some spice into fashion

World domination continues as the Spice Girls put their name to a range of clothes. By Melanie Rickey

They've done everything else, so it seems only natural that the Spice Girls should consider putting their name to a range of clothes – one for each style-setting Spice, of course. What else is there for them to do? They appeared on Clive James Show last Sunday, News at Ten's "and finally…" slot on Monday, the Big Breakfast every morning, The Girlie Show last night, and that's just this week's TV. Radio airplay for their latest single is constant, and the tabloids are Spice crazy. Add to that the possibility of a Spice film (in the style of the Monkees films) and Spice Girl Dolls and we could be heading for a Spice back-lash. Heaven forfend.

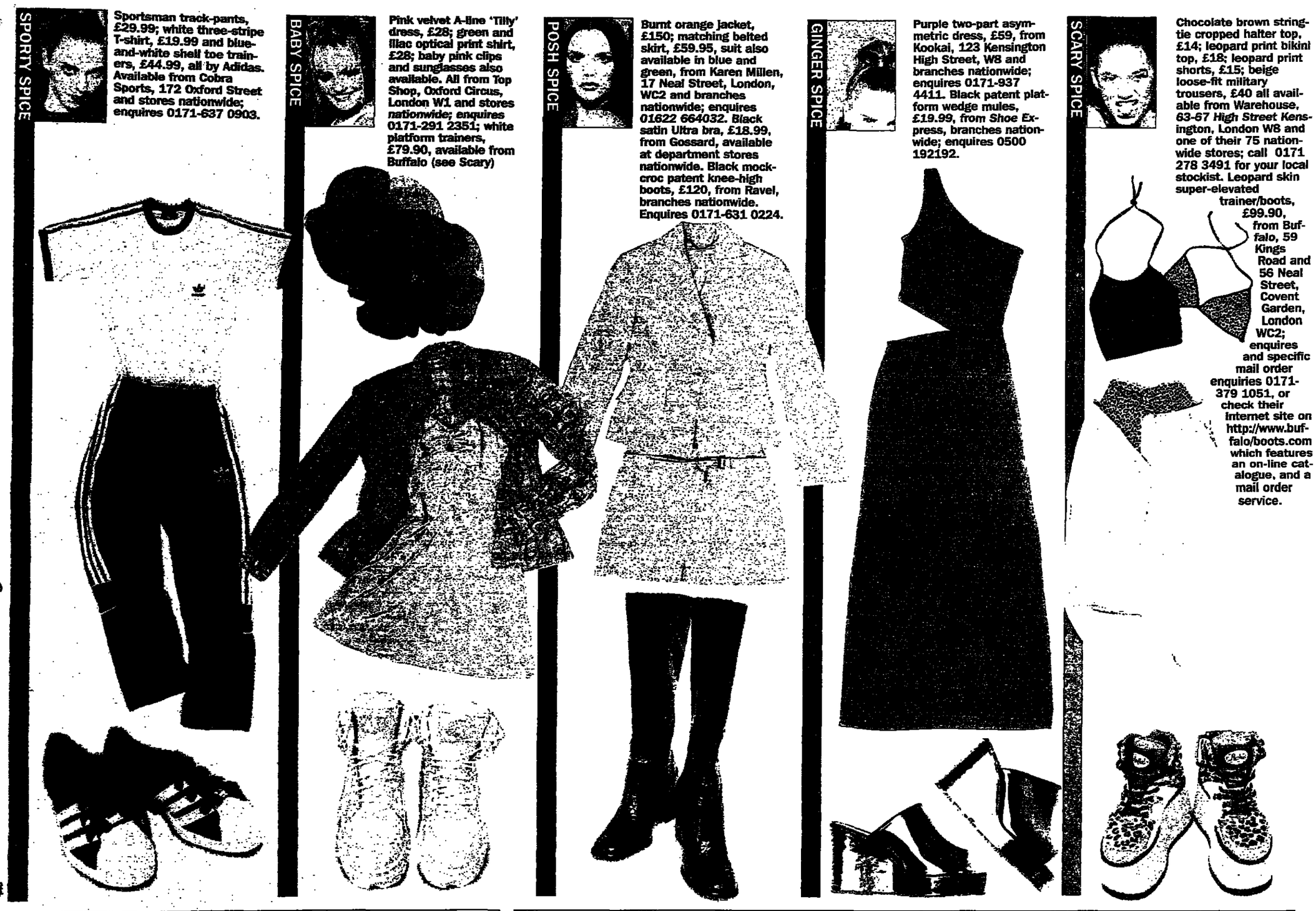
The clothing range won't be on sale until early next year when the band embarks upon their world tour (if indeed it goes into production at all). By then not only will impressionable five-year-olds be the core customer base, but "Baby Spice" could be a Gucci-clad "Vamp Spice" and "Scary Spice" a Dolce e Gabbana'd "Tiger Spice" (just think what £3 million in earnings could do to your taste in clothes). What's more the range will catapult their street cred to Mars. Who wears the Neighbours range of clothes? Zoe Ball's range? Exactly. In reality the Spice look is available on the high street, because it existed before the Spices had sung their first zigzigha, and is available to all women to interpret in any way they please.

The Spices and the high street are well matched. Even last October at the British Fashion Awards, the girls performed their second single "I'll Be There" on the catwalk when the prize for Best High Street Retailer was awarded to Oasis. On those grounds one could almost go so far as to attribute a high street store to each girl. But, today's stores have diversified and aim to cater to as many women and girls as possible. Kookai's customers, for example are not targeted by age, but more by their fashion knowledge and attitude. Some stores have noticed the Spice influence is having a direct affect on sales to their core customers. Warehouse believes the Spice's have encouraged fashion conscious girls into being more daring with trends. Their target customers are 20- to 30-year-old women who are independent, urban, and earn their own money.

Recently, the store has been selling out of their camouflage print mesh dresses and tops – like the one's Mel B wears. They believe The Spice Girls have helped young women understand the way to wear fashion because instead of seeing clothes on stick thin models on magazine pages, they are seeing them on an all-singing, all-dancing role model.

A recent example of Spice fashion power is the Union Jack dress Geri wore at The Brit Awards. Since it was splashed across TV and countless newspapers the company who designed the dress, Lipsy, have renamed it The Geri Dress, and it has consequently sold out from their Top Shop concessions up and down the country. Pictured left, they have offered a dress to the first thirty Independent readers who respond by post (with the assurance that for popular consumption the dress will be a few inches longer).

Send postcards to Geri Dress Competition, c/o Lipsy, 71 Mortimer Street, London W1N, 7DF. Include your home address, a contact number and dress size



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Midland's banking on it

Adwatch by Meg Carter

Midland Bank is changing its spots. Or, to be more accurate, its logo. Out goes the familiar golden griffin on navy blue; in comes a hexagonal symbol in red on white. What better time, then, to spend £20m on a rebranding campaign?

Midland's new advertising strategy broke last week with a return to its old "listening bank" theme, made familiar by successive campaigns throughout the Seventies and Eighties. However, the tone and style of Midland's new TV ads is unlike anything the bank has ever done before.

Three new commercials, created by the advertising agency St Luke's, parody action adventure movies in the tradition of *Mission Impossible*. Bank staff are seen risking life and limb – diving out of planes and into water, scrambling along the top of trains – to respond to customers' demands.

Each ad starts with a complaint overheard by a Midland employee who – after high drama and derring-do – deals with it. It's a far cry from Midland's last campaign, which featured everyday people singing along their hopes and fears to familiar pop tunes.

While the old campaign successfully conveyed the emotional values of the Midland brand, it did not go far enough in selling Midland as an active "doer", Peter Godfrey, the general marketing manager for Midland Bank, explains.

A rethink was called for. And after detailed consultation with bank staff and customers, a radical new approach was agreed.

"We decided to focus on what customers really want: a very simple product which they can easily understand. In financial services, the majority of advertising is warm and empathetic. Midland's approach has moved on – to become more action oriented. In essence, if the customer asks for something, within reason – we'll do it."

It's a grand claim. And one that Godfrey is in no doubt the bank will be able to honour. For the new advertising approach has come from a root-and-branch review of services, he explains. "We have listened to customer complaints and addressed them, changing products where necessary and adding services."

Midland hopes its new approach will both build loyalty amongst existing customers, and lure new business away from rivals. The bank is currently the fourth biggest in the UK, with 4.5 million current account holders – a total of 7.8 million customers when other services are added in.

"It's an attempt to move away from the perceived complacency associated with banks in the past," says Neil Henderson, account director at St Luke's. "The listening bank is a tremendous positioning in the market, but one that has not been to the fore in recent campaigns. While the last one did a wonderful job in making Midland personal at a time when others appeared pompous, the new campaign is a declaration that Midland has moved on."

Undoubtedly, a simplified and impactful approach seems the best strategy for financial services battling to win consumers who are easily bored and confused by their wares, and facing new competition from the self-proclaimed kings of Nineties service culture: the supermarkets.

But will Midland's grand new scheme be complicated by its simultaneous rebranding strategy? The timing of the two is coincidental rather than planned. The rebranding was instigated by Midland's parent, the banking and financial services giant HSBC, to harmonise its operations in 75 countries around the world.

Godfrey, however, denies that dropping the griffin in favour of a red and white hexagon represents much of a risk. "So far, we've had very little customer response at all," he claims. "Besides, it offers a welcome opportunity to draw a line under the old and bring in the new."

What effect the strategy will have remains to be seen. Immediate reaction from Midland customers is muted, as Godfrey suggests. "It's all very exciting, but I'm not sure how all of this directly relates to me," said one retired customer from south London. "When that becomes clear, I'll make my mind up."

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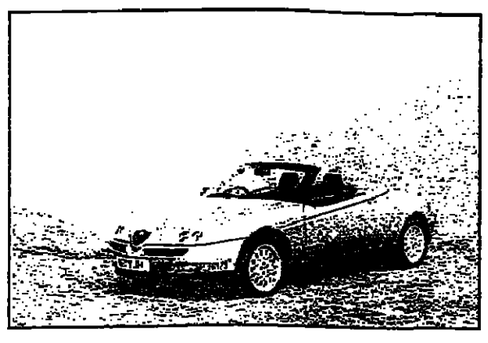
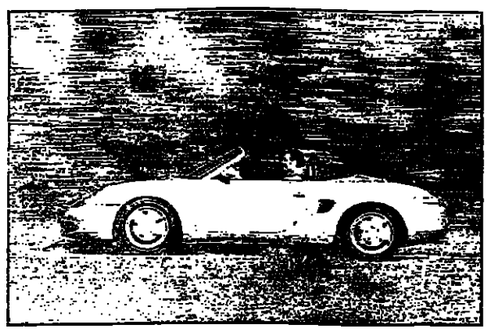
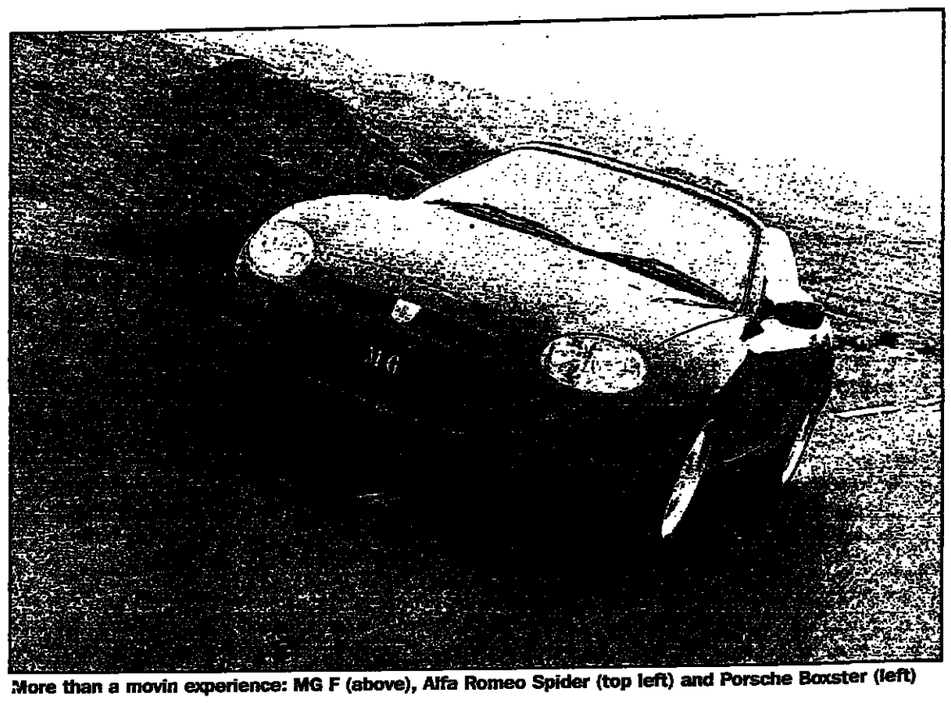




Truly, noisy, speedy

Sports car enthusiasts have never had it so good, says Roger Bell



More than a movin experience: MG F (above), Alfa Romeo Spider (top left) and Porsche Boxster (left)

To jump the queue for a Mercedes-Benz SLK is to line the pocket of a profiteer. Buyers who can't wait their turn for a Lotus Elise, BMW Z3 or Porsche Boxster may also have to pay hefty premiums. Not so long ago, the MG F was on the hit list, too. When demand exceeds supply, market forces incite impatience and extravagance, not to say avarice. But beware: bubbles buoyed by fashion are apt to burst messily, leaving wallets smoking, egos flagging and stocks languishing.

For all the hype that surrounds them, it is not paragons such as the new Merc and Porsche that best reflect soaring interest in sports cars. Nor is it spring fever. Mazda's humble MX-5 – the model credited with the roadster's revival in the early Nineties – is a better barometer. In a static market, interest in the MX-5 would have waned as the competition, notably that from the excellent new MG, intensified. Sales have in fact rocketed, to a record 3,855 in the UK last year. Despite losing the bloom of youth, the little Mazda has cashed in on a sales spree generated by younger rivals. The wider the choice, the greater the interest. Growth in other specialist sectors – diesel, 4x4 and MPV – has been similarly fuelled.

Booms are bad for buyers, as prices are firm, discounts unlikely and deliveries late. For quality, ability and variety, though, the sports car buyer has never had it so good. Although there were almost as many different roadsters on offer 20 years ago as there are now, in 1977 most of them came from just two mainstream players: BL (represented by the MG Midget/B, and the Triumph Spitfire/TR7) and Fiat (Fiat X1/9, Alfa Romeo 2000 and Lancia Monte Carlo). The rest – Caterham, Morgan, TVR (but not Lotus, which didn't have an open two-seater in '77) produced eclectic cars of varying ability, just as they do now. It is the arrival of other major manufacturers – BMW, Honda, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, Renault and Toyota – that has so dramatically improved standards.

Like Mazda, several specialists, led by Lotus (returning to its roots, with the delectable Elise), look set to capitalise on the rush for cars that provide rather more than a moving experience. Here's how they run, at prices below £35,000.

Alfa Romeo Spider
The winner Alfa badly needed. Spectacular styling and plush cabin, but integrity marred by crashy ride and body shake. Handling fluent by front-drive standards, if not mid-engined ones. Great engine: performance unspectacular for the money. Spider is charismatic and a tonic, but the stiffer, roomier GTV coupé is the better drive. Good hood.
Price: £22,590. Power: 150bhp. 0-60mph: 9.0 seconds. Top speed: 125mph

BMW Z3
Nice if you can get it. There are more than 3,000 UK buyers waiting delivery of the US-made Z3 1.9, which is more sunshine tourer than sportster. Remove the BMW badge, and the appeal diminishes. Z3 looks good and handles well – but needs more power. Macho image fostered by Bond movie is better embodied by the 2.8, a latter-day Healey 3000, due this summer. Fine hood.
Price: £19,950 (first orders) Power: 140bhp. 0-60mph: 8.5sec.Top speed: 124mph

Caterham Seven Superlight
Less a means of transport, more a powered skateboard. Cramped, stark, raucous, vulnerable.
Little car for lots of money, but twice as much won't buy more raw amusement. Tuned 1.6 Rover engine, slingshot acceleration, race-bred suspension, pin-sharp handling. Driving machines come no purer than this street-legal racer. Hood? Don't bother.
Price: £17,494 Power: 137bhp: 0-60mph: 4.7 sec. Top speed: 129mph.

Fiat Barchetta
Left-hand drive denies Punto-based Latin charmer a serious role in Britain. Chic styling, novel detailing, plenty of pizzazz, great fun. Eager, economical twin-cam engine gives Mazda MX5-beating performance. Front-drive handling not quite so crisp or tactile. A pretty, practical two-seater at a keen price. Excellent manual hood is quick and simple to operate.
Price: £15,078. Power: 130bhp. 0-60mph: 8.5sec. Top speed: 118mph

Honda CRX
Not the pretty, enthusiast's tearaway it was in a previous incarnation. Powered, party-trick roof panel, which disappears into boot, compromises styling, leaves cabin topless rather than open. Looks awkward, and performance is nothing special since the expensive, humdinger engine was dropped. Handles well, pleasant rather than exciting to drive. Quite economical.
Price: £18,245. Power: 125bhp. 0-60mph: 9.5sec. Top speed: 118mph

Lotus Elise
The best sports car in the world, if not the prettiest. Effects of light weight, great suspension and mid-engined balance put a big smile on the driver's face. Lotus's founder, the late Colin Chapman, would have approved. Steering, handling, agility establish new benchmarks. Performance from MG engine strong. Look elsewhere for plush, goodies. Hood a bad joke.
Price: £19,950. Power: 118bhp. 0-60mph: 6.0 sec. Top speed: 125mph.

Mazda MX-5 1.6i
MX-5 sparked sports car revival, now world's best seller. Took over where MG Midget and Triumph Spitfire – axed in old age for want of demand – left off. At its best on twisty rurals, MX-5 is a lovely mover with sharp rear-drive handling and slick shift. Economy better than performance. Practical, everyday sports car. Pricier 1.8i is faster, better equipped. Easy hood.
Price: £14,410. Power: 88bhp. 0-60mph: 10.5sec. Top speed: 110 mph

MG F
Comfortable, all-purpose charmer to everyone's taste, at reasonable cost. Not as fast or knife-edged as the like-powered Elise, but quick and nimble by other yardsticks. Appeals to the poseur without alienating the enthusiast. Slug-like appearance controversial, but character, behaviour, plush cabin and MG badge generate affection. VVC model faster, 10-second hood.
Price: £16,395. Power: 118bhp. 0-60mph 8.7sec. Top speed: 125mph

Mercedes-Benz SLK
Queue-jumpers will need a big premium for stumpy, auto-only SLK – coupé or cabrio, but never a true sports. Merc quality, name, safety, civility and brilliant, hard-panel headgear are the big attractions of a car that impresses more than it beguiles. Goes well, though supercharged engine is harsh and boomy. Great grip; absence of pin-sharp steering bows to American taste.
Price: £29,500. Power: 190bhp. 0-60mph: 7.5sec. Top speed: 140mph.

Morgan Plus 8
Forward to the past with the fastest of Morgan's antidotes to modern motoring. Appeal rooted in vintage looks, primitive chassis and front suspension inherited from 1910 three-wheeler. Rover V8 engine rumbustious, handling an acquired taste, comfort minimal, resale value great. Fine for strong-armed masochists. Order now for delivery in 2002. Best with hood furled.
Price: £29,328. Power: 192bhp. 0-60mph 6.0 sec. Top speed: 125mph

Porsche Boxster
Think of the "cheap" Porsche as a Lotus Elise with added comfort, civility, sophistication and quality. Mid-mounted flat-six engine lacks muscle, but revs with impunity and a glorious wail. Uncanny cornering powers, sharp steering, balanced handling (goodbye 911). Pricey auto Tiptronic less fun than manual. Cabin uninspired, zero depreciation, powered hood brilliant.
Price: £34,095: Power: 204bhp. 0-60mph: 6.5sec. Top speed: 140mph.

Renault Spider
Pricey French funster is modern version of no-frills sports car. Originally *sans* windscreen (protection was by bug deflector and helmet). Renault's expensive image car now bows to convention. Stunning looks, huge presence, great handling and grip. High weight blunts performance of 2.0-litre Clio Williams engine. Cockpit utilitarian. Hood is unacceptably basic.
Price: £25,950. Power: 150bhp. 0-60mph: 6.9sec. Top speed: 135mph

Toyota MR2 T-bar
Mid-engined, curvy and snug. Twin-seat Toyota too mainstream, too compromised to rival Elise on flair, whoopee, agility. Stronger on comfort, civility, equipment, safety and reliability. Performance nothing special for the price: hard-edged engine potent but frenzied. Handling now ultra-safe rather than super-sensitive. With roof panels off, cockpit is semi-alfresco.
Price: £23,225. Power: 173bhp. 0-60mph: 7.8sec. Top speed: 130mph

TVR Chimaera
Not the fastest, most expensive TVR (the way-out Cerbera grabs those accolades), but arguably the best, especially with tweaked 4.5 Rover V8. Huge performance easily tamed, brakes and handling up to the job, steering quick, grip strong. Quality not to Porsche standards, but competes with authority as cut-price supercar. Lovely noise, cosy cockpit, natty headgear.
Price: £32,950. Power: 285bhp. 0-60mph: 5.0sec est. Top speed: 155mph est.

Westfield SEiGHT
Big 3.9 Rover V8 engine, tiny, Lotus-inspired lightweight chassis; unite them and you have the fastest shoebox on wheels. Original SEiGHT was as loud as it was fearsome. Latest version is quieter, easier to live with. Devilishly fast pocket rocket, more toy than transport. Low on creature comforts, high on excitement. Can be bought as DIY kit.
Price: £25,950. Power: 200bhp. 0-60mph: 4.5sec. Top speed: 135mph.

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It's goodbye to Mini-malism

Sadly, the era of the very small car is over. By John Simister

As I write this, my ears are singing. They have been singing since late last night, which is when I returned from a long and fast journey in a very small car. It was a sophisticated very small car, well dosed with today's technology (electronic fuel injection, a catalytic converter, an airbag, side-impact bars), and furnished in luxurious fashion with wood veneer and sumptuous fabrics. But it was still noisy and bumpy, because it was a Mini.

A new Mini, all plushed up as even the cheapest Minis now are, will cost you £8,995. This is clearly a lot of money for an ancient design with fundamental shortcomings in smoothness and silence, even if it has been updated to suit some modern demands, and it is also a lot of money for something so small. But that is not the point. Today's Mini is not a serious small car, a serious solution to problems of urban auto-overcrowding. It is a toy, an accessory, a bit of fun. A lot of fun, in fact.

But with the demise of the Mini in its role of space-efficient, Minimalist, forward-looking transport solution (its late designer, Sir Alec Issigonis, would have wept if he had known what would become of his brainchild) comes this question. Is there a future for the really small car? Is it relevant? Is it a great idea waiting to be rediscovered?

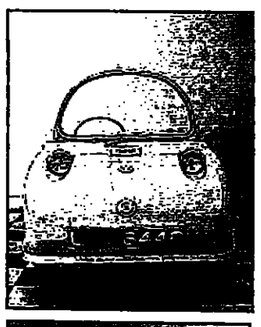
Mini excepted, the truly diminutive motor-car no longer exists except in Japan and Italy. Or not even Italy, in truth, if you define a car's nationality by where it is made, for Fiat's Cinquecento is made in Poland, where labour is cheap and the market for Minimalist motor cars is relatively strong. Tiny cars exist in Japan because their owners don't have to prove they have access to a parking space – which is a big advantage if you happen to live in a Tokyo high-rise – but this is an artificial market condition. Given a free choice, Japan's small-car owners would no doubt prefer something bigger.

Cars that are only fairly small are big news at the moment, however. Last week the Geneva Motor Show was buzzing with opinions on Rover's Spiritual and Spiritual Too concept cars (which, despite appearances, do not in fact hint at the real Mini replacement, which is due in 2000), and on Mercedes Benz's A-class, which goes on sale later this year. But the real next Mini won't be as small as the original, and the A-class, for all its clever, "one box" design and genuine room for four Nineties-size adults, is also considerably more than Mini-sized.

Then there is Ford's weird-looking Ka, just launched but yet to be wholeheartedly welcomed by the "early adopters" beloved of marketing folk.

It seems small, but looks can deceive. Next to a Mini, it's vast. Seat's new Arosa and its imminent Volkswagen-badged counterpart are not much smaller than the Polo to which they are related, while the arrival of the rear-engined Mercedes "Smart" car, a joint venture with the Swatch watch company (and truly small), slips ever farther away.

The fact is that car-makers don't want to build tiny cars any more. Such miracles of miniaturisation cost nearly as much to build as a normal size car, because the construction processes are similar whatever the car's size; and they can cost more to develop, because they demand more ingenuity of their designers. But none of this cuts much ice with the car buyer; if a car is small, it should be cheap. That means paltry profits for its maker unless the car sells in vast numbers, and the reward is not worth the effort.



1960 Tg500 Tiger (top); 1964 Peel Trident (middle); 1959 Goggomobil T-400 Transporter (bottom)
PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTIES

Besides, today's car buyers aspire to grander things. Living standards are high, and there's relatively more money to spend than there was in the Sixties when a basic Mini was a viable family runabout. People like to show their affluence, and won't accept the noise, the discomfort and – obviously – the lack of space that go with a tiny car. If they can't afford a new, larger car, they will buy something second-hand instead. That was a risky strategy in the Sixties, but it makes perfect sense today because cars are better built and more durable.

Then there is the safety angle. Tiny cars are not good to crash in, because there is less structure to crumple before you do. It is this, more than anything else, that drives designers to distraction. Other aspects of modern life militate against microscopic motors, too; parking, for example, is increasingly defined by marked bays, cancelling a tiny car's size advantage. The prognosis is clear. Cars smaller than today's "super-minis" – smaller than a Fiat Punto, a Ford Ka, a Peugeot 106 – are doomed to failure.

And that is a great shame, because a tiny car can entertain like nothing else. You can nip through traffic gaps that cause thrombosis to a bigger car's progress; you can revel in the agility on a twisting road that comes from minimal weight and quick reactions to the controls; you can enjoy the obvious ingenuity of the car's designer. Too bad; the tiny car's time has gone, just like that of the bubble car before it. The Mini has been reduced to a nostalgia-tinged irrelevance, and soon it will die. Note its departure well, for we shall not see its like again.

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homes & money

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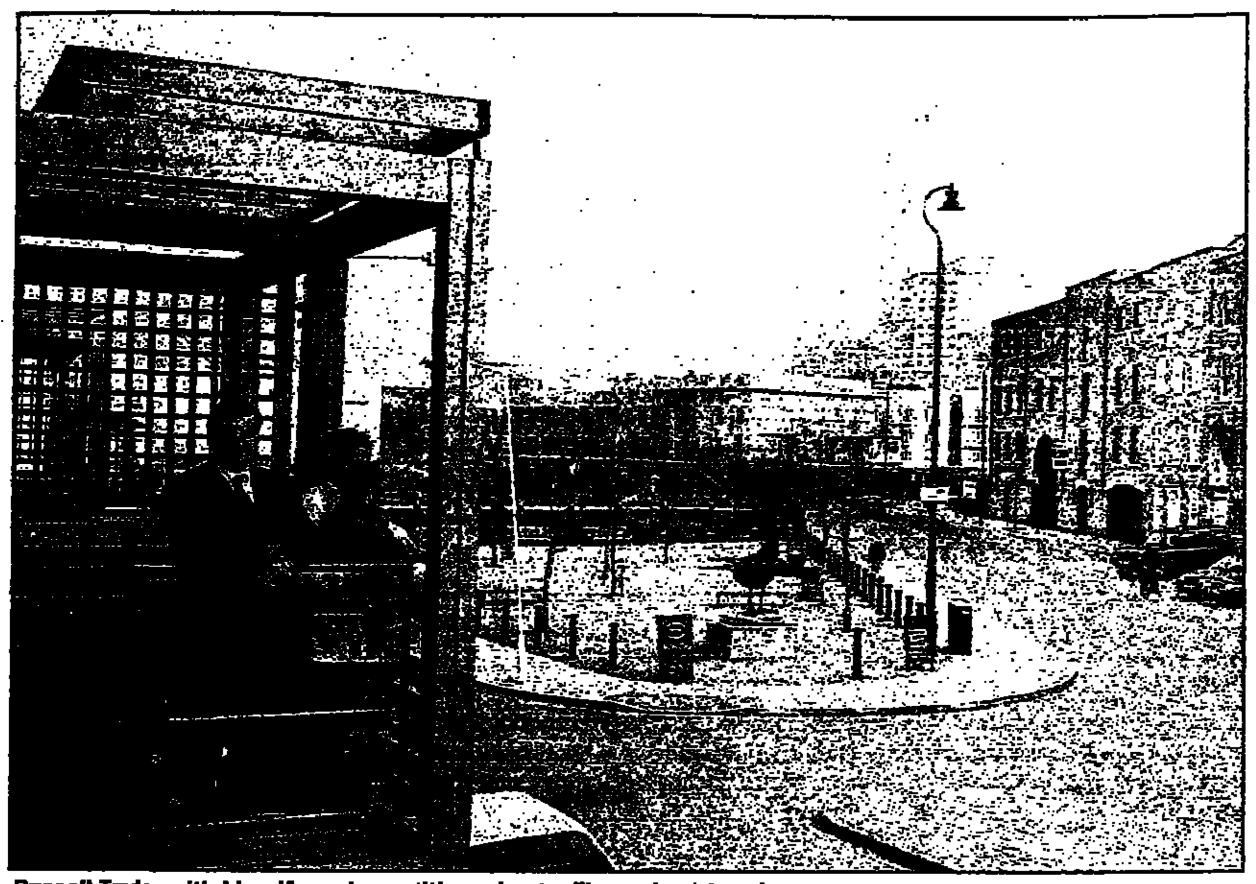
Buyers flock to the dock

Londoners are looking east in the race for space. By Penny Jackson



Russell Taylor with his wife and son: 'It's no longer like a ghost town'
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW BUURMAN

There is a bullishness among London's Docklands residents. Those who had grown used to justifying their decision to live there have seen their numbers swelled by people who like the area for itself – not only for its access to the City and value for money. Over the past year the surge of buyers moving east has brought about a dramatic turnaround in the area.

Second-hand properties which have been languishing on agents' books are suddenly getting offers while developers are seeing half their stock disappear within days of a launch. Some vendors are asking ridiculous prices, according to agents, and anyone who fails to meet a deadline in a popular development will have the frustration of seeing the property sold on for about 5 per cent more. Savills Research, in a survey of major central London residential developments, sees supply drying up there within nine months if the current take-up continues, with those developments in the pipeline or at the planning stage representing only two to three years' supply. Only last year they foresaw an oversupply of new homes in the Docklands.

There is nothing to suggest the trend will slow. The demand for rentals continues to attract investors while good quality flats with long leases, river views and parking are drawing disaffected owners away from the traditional residential areas. The shortage of property on the market is an obvious reason for buyers to look eastwards but Savills suggest that with the arrival of the Jubilee line Docklands may start to look more attractive than Putney or Fulham.

Indeed there are those who have already made their move. Russell Taylor of Savills worked in Docklands for nine years before deciding a year ago to move with his wife and two-year-old son to a house in Limehouse.

"It is only recently that I stopped feeling defensive about the area. We still have an infrastructure problem and there is a massive shortage of things. We could do with a bakery and some small shops, but it is changing fast. After the appalling traffic in the West End it is quite peaceful here. It is also surprisingly good for small children," he adds, citing a new park next door and Montessori nurseries – difficult though it is to picture children in a Docklands lifestyle. He notices that more people are spending their weekends in the area which gives it a new vibrancy.

"It's no longer like a ghost town. Somewhere like Butler's Wharf is always busy now. And in our row of houses there is more of a sense of community than there ever was in Fulham. We can even ring up the pub opposite to book Sunday lunch and they bring it over."

It is in areas close to Tower Bridge like Butler's Wharf, St Katherine's Dock, riverside Wapping and parts of Limehouse, that most people moving to Docklands would choose to live. Also up-market developments near Canary Wharf are pulling in prime central London buyers while Rotherhithe, believes Savills, could start to steal a march on the Isle of Dogs once the Jubilee line is up and running. But sites are becoming scarce in prime locations where already much of the building is in-fill.

Anything out of the ordinary is snapped up. Chimney Court, a 1920s factory in central Wapping, was launched last week, unfinished. Four days later 19 of the 41 flats had sold. It is an unusual building with high ceilings and huge windows, but has little in the way of river views. It is a similar story at Barratt's Hermitage Waterside development, alongside St Katherine's Dock. No one has moved in yet, but half the 76 townhouses and apartments went almost immediately after release. British buyers, normally reticent about buying off plan, increasingly are prepared to put their money down on a good quality development in a prime spot. The 10 to 15 per cent new build premium in these places is better guaranteed if the market does fall than in the cheaper properties. Savills Research finds than 82 percent of new-build buyers in Docklands are from the UK, a higher proportion that anywhere else and quite unlike a development like County Hall which is almost all foreign owned. The criticism that British buyers of new-build are often only offered what is left over from a Far Eastern sales tour does not apply to Docklands, they say.

Owner occupiers and investors do not always want the same things and developers of warehouse conversions know their market to be almost entirely local. However, Tom Marshall of Cluttons does have some concern about so much being sold abroad, especially if it is poor quality.

"If you are selling almost a whole block in the Far East, what happens if the market collapses there? In Docklands he sees the market being fuelled by people with money either to invest or to spend on a second home. "Those not planning to move from other parts of London are being tempted by incredible offers on their homes. In Fulham I get an agent's letter every day."

Increasingly the area is being sold with a lifestyle attached and the integration of hotels, cinemas, shops into residential schemes is regarded as its guarantee for the future. Savills suggest that the hard-learned lesson of Chelsea harbour, completed as the recession took hold, is that an active and imaginative management can see owners through the worst of times and is worth bearing in mind even as they enjoy the best.

By land and water

Property by the sea is going sky-high. By Penny Jackson

Even though it is early, Easter will give the Westcountry its first taste of the annual rush of visitors. Many – with lingering affections for the area – will decide that this is the time to invest in a home away from urban life, preferably close to the water. Those who hanker after the Salcombe estuary, though, will have to find upwards of £750,000 for one of the few houses there. The large inlet, called a ria, is dotted with tiny creeks and is designated an area of outstanding beauty. There are only 30 properties, some with moorings, along that stretch of National Trust land and the last one sold by local agents Marchand Petit went for a million pounds as a second home. They are about to launch six more affordable properties, though, at Hope Cove, south Devon – a bucket and spade family beach.

The two buildings, with three flats each, lead straight on to the sand, and a number of people are interested in them as holiday homes which can be let for as much as £100 per person in high season. The show flat is open at Easter and prices start at £92,500 for a two-bedroom flat.

Further west, in Plymouth, what attracts most people to the Barbican is not just its proximity to the water but that its main purpose is as a fishing harbour. There is nothing contrived about the jumble of boats that are moored there, even if the shops are more likely to sell trinkets than tackle. Some of the oldest streets meander up to the Hoe and even though it has seen harbourside buildings converted into restaurants and bars, its commercial life is still at the centre. During the Eighties, developments of flats sprang up around Sutton Harbour but only now are they regaining their 1988 values, according to Plymouth agents Stratton Creber, who have a two bedroom first floor flat overlooking the water at £83,950 and another at £64,950. A five storey house on the Hoe, looking out to the Sound, sold for just under £200,000.

Plymouth Development Corporation, which has taken over MoD property, is offering a restored shell of 18,000 square feet right on Plymouth waterfront. Stratton Creber are asking for offers in the region of £275,000. In Brighton, investors are buying into Barrat's waterside development at the Marina. One couple recently bought one flat for themselves and two identical ones for investment as Brighton has a very healthy short-term rental market. Prices range from around £57,995 with duplexes starting at £138,995.

In London, it is not just the Thames that offers waterside living. Regalian has converted the Grade II listed Gilbey House, originally a gin distillery, into 75 apartments with views over the Regent's Canal. It has a dramatic central courtyard stretching a full six storeys from the first floor to the open air. It has private underground parking and a leisure centre. Prices range from £99,000 to £510,000.

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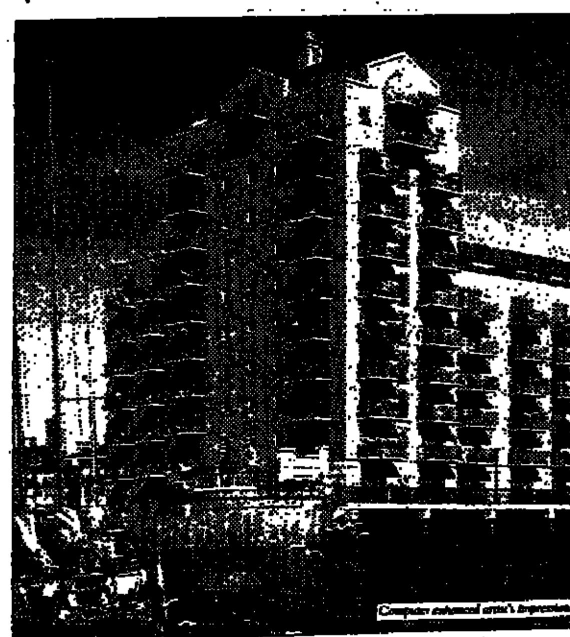

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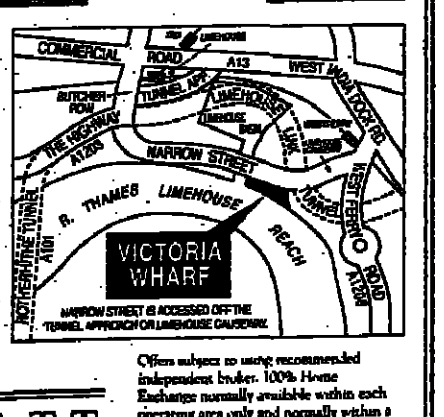

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Houses of Parliament

Rosalind Russell mixes property and politics

In the four years since Tony and Cherie Blair have owned their Victorian semi in fashionable Barnsbury, north London, the house may have "earned" more than the Labour leader's annual salary. Reported to have cost £250,000 when they bought it, the Blairs' house is now valued at nearer to £500,000 by local agents. They have another, much more modest home in Trimdon Colliery, a village in Tony Blair's Sedgefield, Co Durham constituency.

Meanwhile, John and Norma Major's house in Great Stukeley, in Major's Huntingdon constituency, is worth about £300,000, a rise of £100,000 since 1990 when prices went into freefall.

In their *Country Residential Review*, the agency Knight Frank predicts a price hike of 25 per cent nationally over the next three years. And despite their warning of a probable two-to-three-month pause in the market in the runup to the general election, business is brisk. Such is the shortage of property, "even the old dogs are selling", beams one Home Counties agent, cheerfully confident that his blue-rinse clients will never know his true opinion of their homes.

But there are dramatic variations in price movements around the country. The West Midlands and Wales have had varied fortunes. Parts of the West Midlands have seen healthy increases, especially for cottages, but in Wales the market

Left wing: No 5 Trimdon Hall Farm

remains flat. In Scotland, a good-sized farmhouse will sell in weeks, but the market is awash with castles owned by people who, KF say, have "unrealistic vendor expectation relative to demand".

Dire warnings about what may happen to the property market if Labour get in have been a feature of the previous two general elections. They have been muted on the subject this time round, unable to wave a bogey of high interest rates at home owners who have struggled through years of negative equity, reduced mortgage interest relief and job insecurity. As most high-street estate agents will tell you, most people think it's irrelevant who wins: they'll buy or sell anyway, according to personal circumstances.

Whatever the outcome, you can barely slide a cigarette paper between the two leaders' constituencies when it comes to house prices. East Anglia and what Knight Frank describes as "the hinterlands of Durham" are both popular, prosperous areas. Sedgefield is no more flat-cap and pigeon-loft territory than Huntingdon is.

"Sedgefield has a country feel to it," says David Mills, of Reeds Rains. "It is a small market town, a bit of an oasis in Co Durham, which has many ex-mining communities. The schools are good, there is a racecourse and good local shops, and we have more pubs per capita than anywhere else. It is a fairly well-off community."

Home owners around Sedgefield commute to Durham or to Darlington, about 10 miles either way, but the area has also benefited from the new Japanese Samsung electronics factory in the North-east. Houses costing more than £100,000 are thin on the ground because people who own them are happy to sit tight.

Ken Walton, married with two children, and

Right wing: Thatched Abbots Barn

manager of a nursing home, bought a three-bedroom, semi-detached house in Sedgefield for £56,000. "It had been valued at £65,000. And when I've built an extension, with a garage, bedroom and kitchen, it'll be worth £90,000. With an election coming up, I hope the rates stay much the same. If Labour get in, I think they will. If the Conservatives get in, I think they'll go through the roof."

Peter Lane, of Peter Lane & Partners in Huntingdon, could do with a few more homes like John Major's. "There just aren't enough to satisfy demand. But he has found the Prime Minister a new neighbour. Geoff and Anne Beaver are buying the £220,000 three-bedroom bungalow opposite the Majors' home in Great Stukeley.

"We wanted a home close to the A1, which this is, because as an insurance broker I do a fair bit of travelling," says Geoff. "I think it was mentioned in the particulars about the Majors living opposite, *but that is not* why we are buying it. We liked Great Stukeley because it is a real village, with a village hall and pub and a life of its own."

If John Major loses the next election, there is a minor consolation. Knight Frank predict that East Anglia and the neighbouring East Midlands will see the strongest house price appreciation in the UK during the next three years.

No 5 Trimdon Hall Farm dates back to at least 1718. The four-bedroom house, close to Trimdon village green, has been extended and modernised. Reeds Rains are asking £114,500. Thatched Abbots Barn in Hemingford Abbots, near Huntingdon, dates from 1631. It has been extended to include three bedrooms. There are inglenook fireplaces in the sitting room and dining room. A thatched barn has planning permission for a self-contained unit. Peter Lane is asking £155,000.

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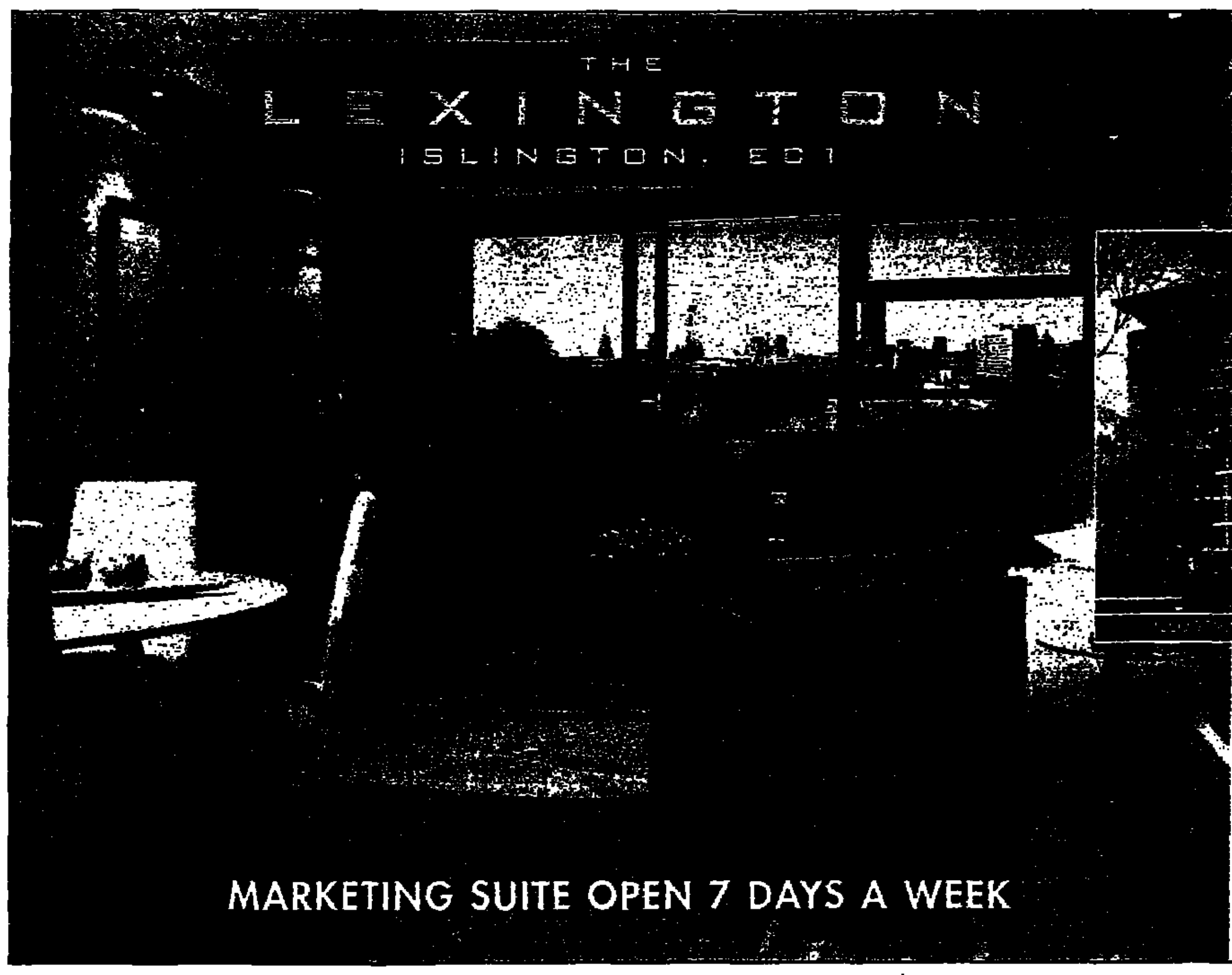

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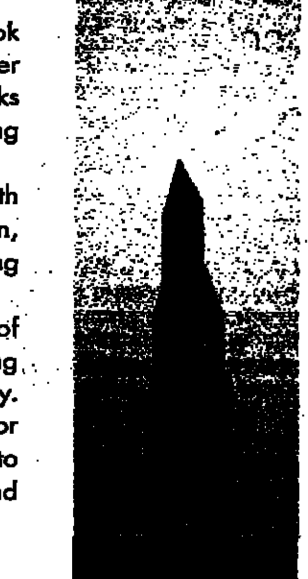

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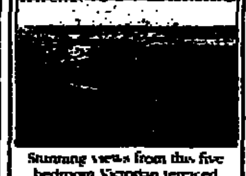

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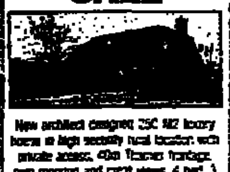

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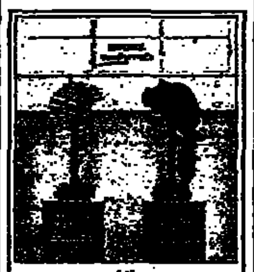

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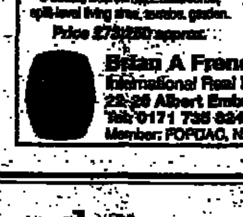

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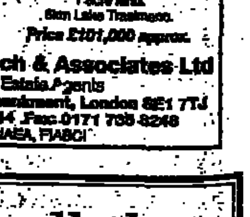

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Property is hot again

Rachel Fixsen reports on how not to get your fingers burnt

Anyone with negative equity will guffaw at the term "property as an investment". For real belly laughs it is second only to the old chestnut "safe as houses". But things look very different in the property market these days. Residential property prices are forecast to leap by up to 12 per cent this year after an 8.8 per cent rise last year. Commercial property has also picked up.

Should you take a fresh look at the property market as a way of boosting your savings, or does it still have too many drawbacks?

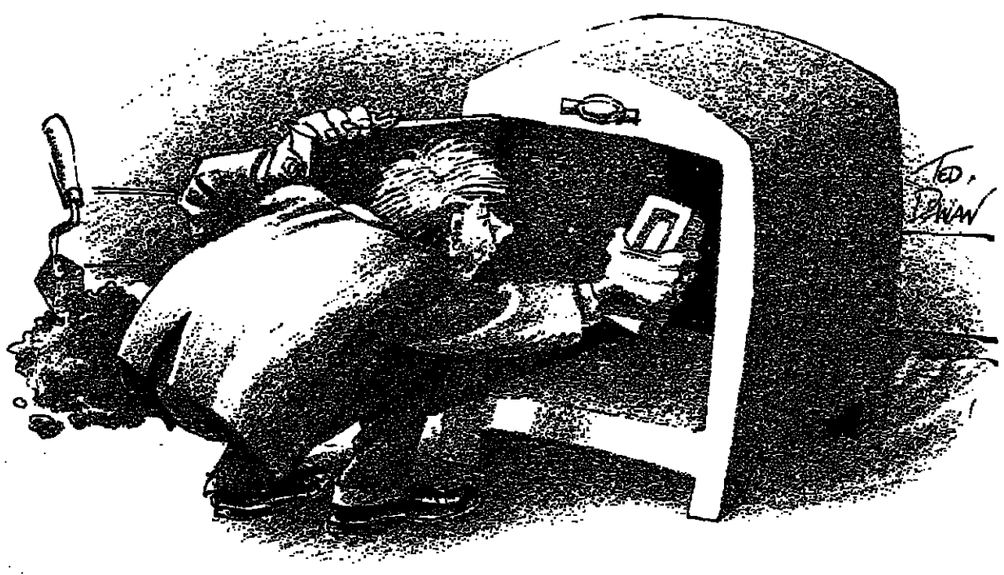
Buying units in a property unit trust lets you reap any benefits of a rising market, but dodge many of the pitfalls of direct investment in bricks and mortar.

"Anyone can buy a small shop and let it out, but it is paved with stupendous difficulties for the small investor and carries a very high risk," says Peter Smith, regional director of independent financial advisers Hill Martin.

Trying to let and manage a property on your own could prove a nightmare. Another serious problem with buying a building as an investment is that it is illiquid – which means it is hard to turn it back into cash quickly if you need to. There may be no immediate buyer for that particular property.

Valuation is a further obstacle for property as an investment. Valuing the share of a listed company is easy, because you can compare it to the thousands of identical sales made each day. But property valuations can turn out to be hopelessly wrong. They are no more than somebody's opinion of what a building might fetch.

With a property unit trust, on the other hand, you can sell your units for cash at any time. And they are simply worth a proportion of valuations of the trust's underlying properties. Unless the trust ran into serious difficulties, it would not actually have to sell its assets to give you your money back.



Barclays Unicorn and Norwich Union Trust Managers both run authorised property unit trusts.

The Barclays Unicorn trust holds 80 per cent of its assets in property, mostly offices and shops with some retail warehousing and industrial buildings. The other 20 per cent is held in property shares and other liquid assets.

John Kelly, investment director of the Barclays Unicorn trust, admits the UK property market still has its black spots. "There are still some valuations that are 20 per cent less than at the height of the Eighties," he says.

But all buildings are not the same. "As long as you have a reasonable location and a flexible building structure, you're seeing relatively good growth." A flexible office building structure could be easily adapted to accommodate a certain type of technology, for example.

Mr Kelly says Unicorn property trust should yield between 10 and 12 per cent this year, with between 6 and 8 per cent coming from rental income, and the rest from capital growth. You can invest upwards of £1,000 in the Barclays Unicorn property trust.

Norwich Union's unit trust, which has a slightly higher proportion of liquid assets, has the same minimum investment.

A new breed of quoted property unit trust is due to launched this summer. Hopes are high that this new investment vehicle could breathe new life into the commercial property market, by increasing liquidity. You could also invest in property indirectly by buying shares in companies which manage property. Share prices in this sector have shot up in the last few months.

Ray Jones, property analyst at stockbroker UBS, says shares in property firms outperformed the broader stock market by 10 per cent in 1996, on the back of stabilisation of the direct property market at the end of 1995.

Property shares produced an average return including dividends of more than 28 per cent in the last year, according to Salomon Brothers' UK property securities index. Capital Shopping Centres would have given a massive 75 per cent return.

Mr Jones sees a steady trend towards growth for property shares in general. But there are areas where shares will do better than this. Companies owning central London offices, particularly in the West End, and firms with large regional shopping centres are poised for above average returns, he says.

British Land, Capital Shopping Centres, Chelsfield and Pillar Property Investments are four which still look good value, according to Mr Jones.

Property is often seen as an "anti-cyclical" investment, meaning it goes against the grain of the prevailing economical trend. So if you're betting on a bad year for stocks, particularly given the looming general election, property could be a good safe haven for your money.

But investing in property is largely for the well-heeled. Equities offer a much more suitable deal for those with an investment portfolio of less than £100,000, advisers say. "It's just less flexible," says Roger Harris of independent financial advisers Roger Harris & Co. "Property unit trust units can be sold fairly easily, but there's always the possibility of delaying any sale." He adds that a delay could be up to six months.

Charges levied on property unit trusts can sometimes be quite high, Mr Harris says. This is largely due to the cost of managing properties.

And some are dubious that the property market recovery is as solid as is often proclaimed.

"I think it is a chastening walk through the City of London ... I'm staggered at the number of completely obsolete properties which are dark and shuttered," warns Mr Smith.

American tips worth noting

Analysis of tipsheets shows that many positively harm their readers' wealth. Such titles can be a profitable business, but can they be of profit to investors?

Can investors hope to make any money out of following stock market tipsheets? We do not have a great tradition in this country of tipsters offering share tips through newsletters, as they do in the United States.

There it is a big business, with literally hundreds of titles. So much so that the market is able to support a newsletter, *Hulbert's Financial Digest*, which does nothing else but analyse the performance of other investment newsletters!

Although a few (such as those produced by Martin Zweig) are excellent, well-researched publications as good as anything on Wall Street, many of the American newsletters are very poor quality indeed, produced by individuals with few qualifications and little experience to back up their advice. Careful analysis by Mr Hulbert over many years has shown that only a handful of titles consistently offer advice which is profitable to investors.

More precisely, while many newsletters inevitably pick some winning individual stocks, anyone who followed all the advice that the tipsters have offered would be unlikely to have made any money from the exercise. On average, the number of dud recommendations greatly outweighs the tips which have come good, very much as happens with racing tipsters.

Some – perhaps most – are positively harmful to their readers' wealth, but this does not stop them promoting themselves assiduously with promises of great gains ahead – often based on the most extraordinarily selective accounts of their past performance.

Jonathan Davis

How do they get away with it? The US Supreme Court, no less, ruled in a landmark case in 1985 that even amateurs who produce newsletters are in effect exempt from the Investment Advisors Act, and therefore from regulation. The First Amendment, the court decided, provides them with the right to peddle their tips, whatever their track record. The principle of *caveat emptor* – or buyer beware – remains, in the great American tradition, splendidly sacrosanct.

Such a *laissez faire* regime seems unlikely to catch on here, where the tradition of regulation is entrenched, and the law/regulatory system goes to huge – and frequently futile – lengths to protect individuals from their own capacity for financial folly.

One of the longest surviving – and perhaps the best known – pure tipsheet in the UK is the *Fleet Street Letter*. This has had a chequered history over the years, but has the distinction of being the vehicle through which two millionaire businessmen – Nigel Wray (the rescuer of Saracens rugby club) and Michael Green (the boss of Carlton Communications) – first obtained a quotation on the London stock market. In the right hands a successful newsletter can become a very profitable business indeed.

What we do have in this country is a fairly long tradition of tipping shares in newspapers. How good are they? Mike Mitchell has had the bright idea of analysing the performances of tipsters, tracking all the individual tips made by specialist newsletters and in national newspapers – and seeing how they performed subsequently. His findings, which he publishes as a regular newsletter of his own called *Tiptracker* (0181-747 9497), make for interesting reading.

Apart from the usual problems involved in measuring performance – many tipsters are notoriously good at hedging their bets, making it hard to pin down what they are saying – two things are clear from his analysis.

One is that the newspaper tipsters, by and large, fare less well at picking stocks than the best specialist newsletters. (An honourable mention here to Quentin Lumsden, for many years a columnist on the *Independent on Sunday*, who also produces two newsletters, *Chart Breakout* and *Quantum Leap*, which both have shown a strong recent track record in spotting small company growth stocks.)

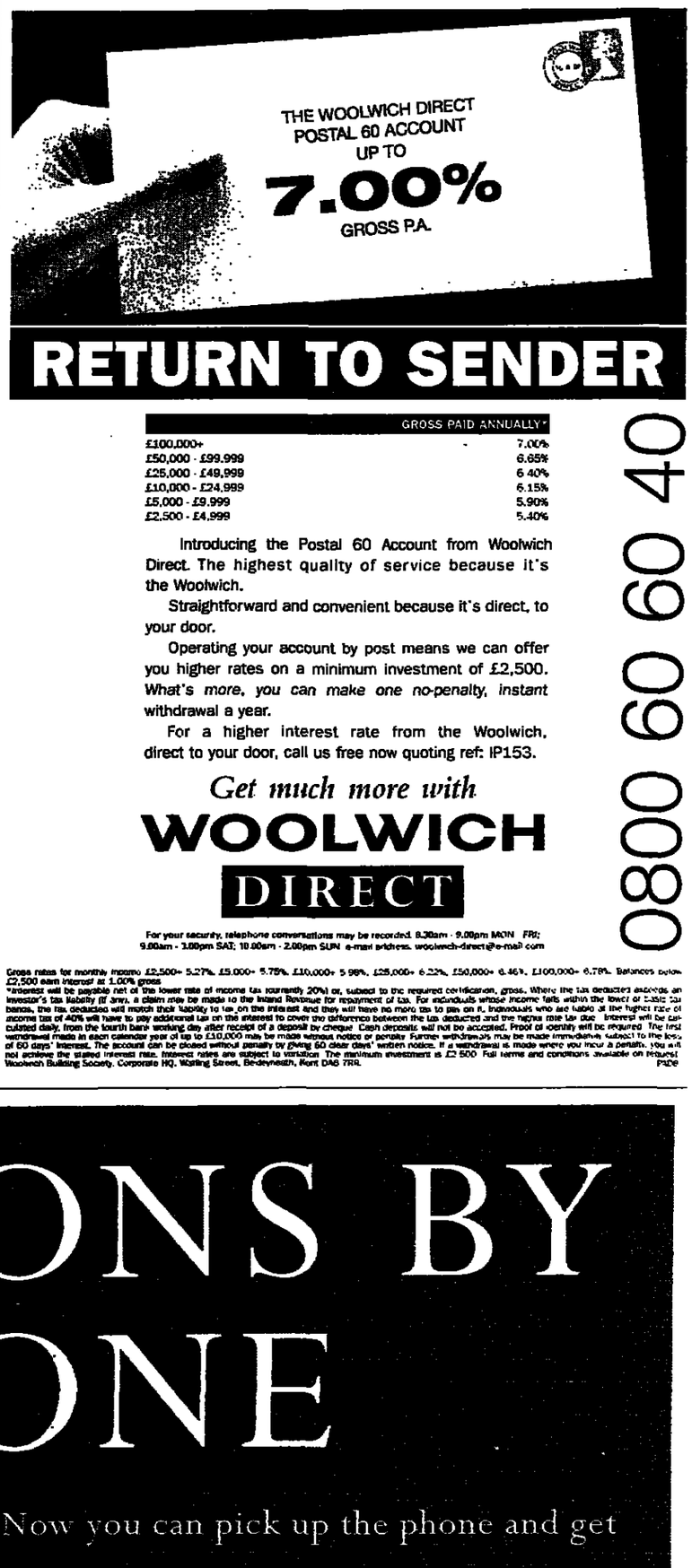
The second – and perhaps more surprising – finding in Mr Mitchell's analysis is that there do appear to be one or two specialist titles which do, on recent evidence, have rather good track records at spotting winners. Apart from Mr Lumsden's titles, he particularly rates the performance of *Analyst*, a monthly publication produced by a former stockbroker, Jeremy Utton, and a team of other former broking analysts.

I can vouch for the fact that *Analyst* is a serious and well-regarded title which attempts to apply rigorous investment appraisal techniques to the task of picking smaller company growth stocks. Mr Utton has a relatively conservative investment approach, and the style and pricing of the publication (£97.50 for new subscribers, £120 a year thereafter) marks it out as a cut above the "heard it in a pub" style of tipsheet further down the market.

How good is it? Well, last year, according to *Tiptracker*, the 51 shares tipped by Analyst produced an overall gain of 18.9 per cent, which compares with a 12.9 per cent gain on the FTSE All share index. (But note that the analysis takes no account of dividends, which add a further 3 to 4 per cent a year to the total return on the market.)

Most tipsters prefer to trawl among smaller quoted companies, which have little or nothing to show by way of dividend. Of *Analyst's* tips last year, just over one in three produced gains of more than 30 per cent. At least three stocks doubled during the year. But 21 tips failed to show any gain at all. Is a two-to-five ratio of losers to winners good or bad?

Clearly, nobody should expect a ticket to riches for just £120 a year. But the better publications, such as *Analyst*, can be valuable additions to the investor's armoury. Anyone who thinks, however, that they are going to get rich solely by following tips in a newsletter – as thousands of Americans apparently do – obviously needs to think again.



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It's a nice little urna

Collect to invest: John Windsor finds Buddhist art enlightening

The Chinese are coming. The explosion of wealth in newly liberalised mainland China has already created 55 billionaires, and this month's second International Asian Art Fair in New York is expected to be a blockbuster.

How long before we spot raffish, over-the-collar "Chinese" haircuts – as close-cropped, Westernised Hong Kong auctioneers have dubbed the mainland fashion – at auctions of Chinese art in London? Unable to wait, I visited the London oriental art gallery of John Eskenazi and begged him: "Teach me to love the Buddha."

After all, those impassive faces of gilt-bronze seated oriental Buddhas with all-seeing urnas in their forehead are not easy on the Western eye. Mr Eskenazi provided the antidote. He threw open what looked like a built-in wardrobe.

Spotlights clicked on inside, illuminating a resplendent, 3ft-high early 15th century Tibetan Vajradhara, gilded bringer of enlightenment. "You can feel the beatitude," he said. Indeed, I could. In the market for Buddhist art, love and money, the spiritual and the material, are interlinked.

The more spiritual the appearance, the more valuable. The first thing that dealers and auctioneers look at – even before age and condition – is the Buddha's face. Then the hands. Serenity and compassion sell. Ugliness does not. Mr Eskenazi says: "All the best pieces have an inner tension, a divine quality. They make contact with one's inner self."

I saw more Tibetan than Chinese Buddhas in the top London galleries. Dealers, many of them passionate connoisseurs who are really collectors in disguise, seem to prefer the Tibetans' more forceful and complex spiritual values to the restrained simplicity of the Chinese.

But new Chinese collectors – whose ancestors employed the finest Tibetan and Nepalese craftsmen – will nevertheless want to buy Chinese Buddhas first. In London at present both are undervalued – good news for Brits who cannot afford £120,000 for a big 15th century figure.

At Christie's South Kensington, six to seven-inch high gilt-bronze Buddhas from the 11th to the 18th centuries, still with a respectable amount of gilt on them, can be had for £400-£500. Two years ago, they were fetching only £200-£300. You might still get a 16th century bronze Buddha for as little as £200 – a ludicrously low price for an object individually modelled in clay then cast by the lost-wax process.

A wax model with a clay core was encased in a clay jacket and baked, so that the wax ran out, leaving a cavity to be filled with molten bronze. A few Chinese mainlanders are already attending London auctions in person but hardly any Tibetans can afford to. The bidding is as yet dominated by dealers, notably the Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese.

South Ken's specialist, Nader Rasti, says: "Prices have got a long way to go." Especially if British private buyers step in. Beginners with limited experience could specialise in specific, affordable types of Buddha, such as those of the Qianlong (pronounced "chen-lung") reign (AD1736-1795) during the Qing ("ching") dynasty.

Some 10 per cent of the edition of 21,000 made then is thought to have survived. They are quite charming, six to seven inches high, with reign marks including date in Chinese characters on their base. Expect to pay from £200 for the battered to £1,200 for fine specimens.

Or, for £1,000-£2,000, both at auction or in galleries, go for bronze Buddhas of the same size dating from two Ming dynasty reigns – Yongle (AD1403-1424) and Xuande (AD1426-1435) – during which the standard of casting reached a peak. Gilt-bronze versions will cost you £2,000-£5,000 – but the higher price carries more sustainable value.

For the past 15 years it has been pottery, not bronze, that has caught the attention of Eastern and Western collectors, ever since Chinese treasure hunters began looting antique pottery from graves, smuggling it out of Hong Kong.

They boosted demand for newly excavated wares such as those magnificent Tang horses (AD618-906) – but flooded the market. Only in the past three years, with the establishment in mainland China of over 100 state-led auction houses, has there been a shift in taste – towards painting and calligraphy.

The auction of excavated goods is forbidden. And at those auctions there is scarcely a bronze Buddha to be seen. Good news or bad? In fact, almost all China's surviving bronze Buddhas, of which infinitely fewer were made than pottery wares, are in the West – beyond the reach of any clampdown on exports from Hong Kong after the June hand-back.

Remaining above ground, those that were not sold off in the late 19th century were lost in wars, destroyed or stolen by the Japanese invaders of 1939 or discarded during the Cultural Revolution of 1968-78, when it was illegal to own art. No Buddhas in China means no Buddha market there.

Do the Chinese really want them? Is not modern Chinese materialism more suited to Confucius than Buddha? I got the most bullish answer from the London dealer Michael Goedhuis. "The point is Chinese Buddhas are Chinese. That is why they are going to want them. Ever since the fifth and fourth centuries BC, collecting has been a cultural passion in China, with bronze and jade the two pillars of the culture.

"When the new rich Chinese have bought their big houses and cars they will revert to their old pattern, bear down upon the West and suck back all their cultural goods. A lot of people here are not aware how fast people in China are making money. All Chinese art is going to be very expensive."

All that is lacking is the liberal granting by the Chinese authorities of foreign tourist visas – decreed in principle last November. Chinese wanting to travel abroad endure interminable interviews. Few visas are granted. Yes, the Chinese are coming. But at the moment some of them are having a little difficulty.

Selling serenity: John Eskenazi with Buddha PHOTOGRAPH: PETER MACDIARMID

Under the hammer: what's up for auction next week

London: Can the Swedish etcher Anders Zorn's volatile women be trusted with a little flutter? His alluring nudes are back in Sotheby's print sale in London, Thursday (10.30am). Cubism with a Czech accent: Picassoesque paintings by avant-garde artists who formed the Group of Plastic Artists in Prague in 1911 are in Sotheby's mid-season Impressionist and modern sale, Wednesday (10.30am). In the same sale: mass-produced Picasso ceramics. Sotheby's contemporary art: Thursday (2.30pm). More Picasso crocks at Christie's South Kensington Impressionist and modern sale, Monday (2pm). Three musical instrument sales this week, the biggest at Sotheby's, Tuesday (10.30am), with 450 instruments. Others at Christie's South Kensington, Wednesday (10.30am) and Bonhams, Wednesday (3pm).

Countrywide: Altrincham: Sale by tender of small lots of miscellaneous toys, Tuesday, at Blue Chip Park. Elliot Partnership (0161-926 9884). Darlaston, Walsall: High quality British-made footwear Thursday, at Lynedene Manor Industrial Estate. Capital Estates (0121-526 6917). Taunton: Toys, militaria, coins, stamps, photographs, toys, Tuesday. Lawrence Fine Art, Magdalene Street (01823 330567). Manchester: Lesney Matchbox toys Wednesday. Capes Dunn, 38 Charles Street (0161-273 1911).

Further information about auctions and fairs: *Antiques Trade Gazette*, and Government Auction News (fax information line 0336-423488). JW

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The Square Mile must be deserted during the Cheltenham Festival. I cannot be sure. I was at Cheltenham too. But, judging by the number of brokers, fund managers and investment bankers thronging the terraces of the greatest National Hunt course in the land, Threadneedle Street and Throgmorton Avenue must have been empty.

This City preoccupation with racing and, by association, gambling is a little worrying. Given the recent problems at NatWest Markets, I would have thought any self-respecting trader would not have been seen dead within a mile of a bookie. Still, all that corporate hospitality must make it hard to stay away.

Failing to make money on the potential dog food at Cheltenham led me to reflect on whether there is still a turn to be made on the outcome of the general election.

Derivatives broker GNI has produced an interesting tome termed *The GNI Guide to the UK General Election*. It contains much useful information, quite a lot of which is new to me. It seems that 32 days is the average period between announcing the date of a general election and the actual polling day. This suggests that we may not hear when the election is to be called until Easter.

Brian Tora

Back from Cheltenham, the City is now placing bets for after the election

More importantly for investors, they have examined polls of fund managers – and have conducted their own surveys – to try to discover what the movers and shakers of the City believe will happen after the election.

Not surprisingly, more investment professionals think the market will go down than up if the Labour Party is triumphant. The percentage that are pessimistic for stocks and shares rises dramatically if the majority is large. A surprise Conservative win would be taken as a rally call for the market – or so respondents almost universally believe. Investment managers are clearly taking their lead from 1992 when the Tory victory led to a 136-point jump in the Footsie.

Less consistent is the belief that sterling would fall under Tony Blair. Given that many consider an interest rate rise more likely under Labour than the Conservatives, this seems unlikely. Also, so far as both sterling and the market are concerned, if people are nervous, why are we not seeing selling pressure now?

It is not too difficult to answer that last question – at least as far as share prices are concerned. We know from recent surveys and from the problems faced by some fund managers such as PDFM that institutional liquidity is reasonably high. With positive cashflows continuing, there is plenty of money overhanging the market. This situation will be exaggerated further by the windfall issues of shares in building societies and insurance companies as they give up their mutual status. There are plenty of potential buyers out there.

So where does the money go? Construction has traditionally been a fruitful sector to back under a Labour administration. Spending money on infrastructure projects is a quick way of creating employment and kick-starting the economy – as if it really needs it.

Then, of course, we can expect some redistribution of wealth, so the less well off may have more money to spend. This could be good news for retailers like Kingfisher, though perhaps the knock-on effect will not extend as far as Harrods. Also, some other leisure sectors may benefit, such as breweries, particularly if they have holiday interests as well, as Scottish & Newcastle do with Centre Parcs.

There will be sectors to avoid, of course. Utilities stand out, given the declared intent to levy both a windfall tax and to tighten regulation. But this has already been well signalled and may have been factored in the price. Railway operators could fall into this situation, although there are doubtless efficiency gains still to be made following privatisation.

Then again, given the increasing difficulty that many of us are finding in spotting the difference between Labour and Tory policies, perhaps we can just continue as we are. But that wouldn't be good for business in the City, would it?

Brian Tora is chairman of the investment strategy committee at Greig Middleton, stockbrokers (0171-392 4000)

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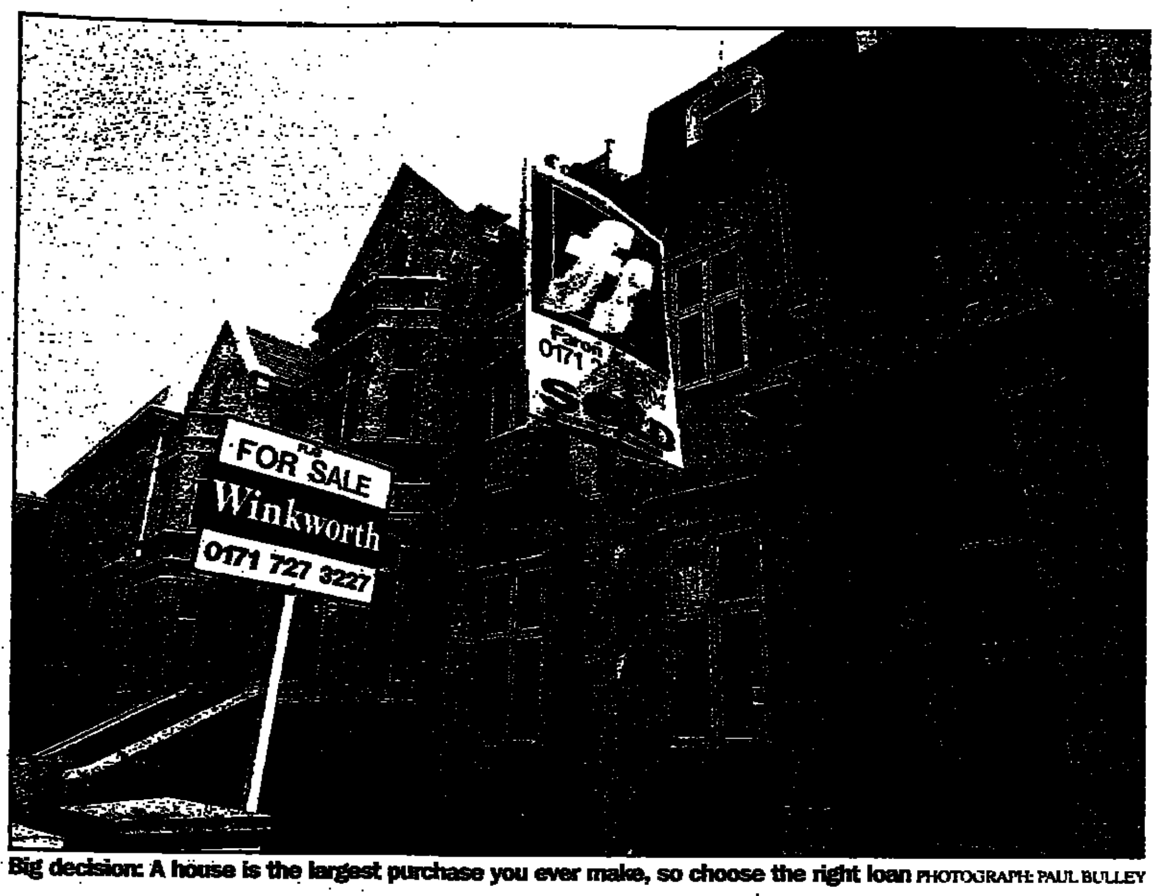
Mortgages are becoming more flexible, writes Nic Cicutti



Big decision: A house is the largest purchase you ever make, so choose the right loan PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL BULLEY

Mortgages are easy to understand, right? You take out a loan and then pay back a certain amount every month for the next 20 or 25 years. This simple type of mortgage has been the mainstay of the home loan market for more than a century.

Yet for many borrowers, the requirement to pay a fixed amount each month, seemingly in perpetuity, has always been one of the most unattractive features of buying a house.

Until recently, the response of lenders was similar to Henry Ford. When asked whether his first car, the Model T, was available in a choice of colours, he was said to have replied: "You can have any colour you like, as long as it's black."

Today, however, more and more lenders have entered the market with a range of flexible mortgages, offering greater repayment choices to consumers. Not before time.

As Vicky Burn, deputy editor of *MoneyFacts*, says: "For the majority of us, the largest purchase we ever make is buying a home. It is therefore important to choose a mortgage to suit each person's financial situation.

"Flexible mortgages are intended to give loans that suit borrowers' circumstances both now and in years to come."

The principle behind flexible mortgages is simple. In various ways, they allow borrowers choices as to how they repay their loan. This can be useful in cases where people may face sudden extra costs, such as having a child.

For example, Bank of Scotland offers loans which allow borrowers the option of overpaying each month to reduce the scale of their loan. Minimum £500 lump-sum repayment options are available. This can be handy if, as with many, you come in for a small windfall.

BoS also allows underpayment worth up to the equivalent of six months' instalments, plus a choice of instalment options. Finally, the bank offers the possibility of lump-sum withdrawals of the mortgage already paid. BoS currently operates a variable rate of 7.24 per cent.

Legal & General Mortgage Services, the insurance company's home loans arm, also offers over and underpayment options, plus lump-sum withdrawals, up to the available reserve in the mortgage account. L&G's current variable rate stands at 6.49 per cent, with loans on offer based on up to 95 per cent of a home's value.

Scottish Widows, another insurer, recently launched its own flexible mortgage, which offers overpayment options – but with a minimum lump sum of £2,000. No underpayments are allowed, but withdrawals of at least £1,000, based on a single monthly cheque, can be taken from the loan account. Scottish Widows' mortgage is offered at a variable rate of 6.73 per cent, on up to 80 per cent of a home's value.

Stroud & Swindon, a relative minnow among building societies, has entered the flexible market with a 7.25 variable interest rate on up to 85 per cent of the home's value. The society allows any overpayment, no underpayments, but a withdrawal facility from the mortgage account.

In addition, borrowers are given further incentives, including up to 3 per cent of the mortgage advance, plus free valuation and legal costs. Incentives of this type are available from many other flexible mortgage lenders.

Another option available is that of payment holidays. These are on offer from Bank of Scotland, First national Building Society, Legal & General, Market Harborough and Tipton & Coseley building societies.

Two lenders, Woolwich and Abbey National, offer a variant on this theme. Instead of allowing over and underpayments, or cash withdrawals, they simply offer payment holidays.

Flexible mortgage providers

	Monthly underpayment
Bank of Scotland	Yes
Clydesdale Bank	No
First National BS	Within reserve
Furness BS	No
Legal & General	Within reserve
Market Harborough	Fixed for 2 yrs
Scottish Widows	No
Stroud & Swindon	No
Sun Banking Corp	No
Tipton & Coseley	No
UCB Homeloans	No

Source: MoneyFacts

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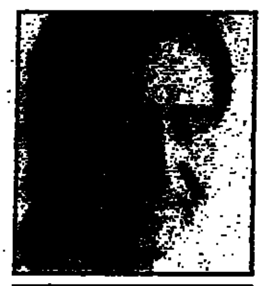
Nic Cicutti

Three-quarters of credit card holders would rather pay a lower interest rate on their card debts than receive "reward" points from their issuer. Who says so? Well, surprise, surprise, this nugget came from a poll carried out by a card issuer offering a credit card with lower interest rates.

Never mind that the majority of people rarely, if ever, go into debt with their credit card. For them reward points are a bonus. Meanwhile, three-quarters of card holders are afraid to go shopping with real money. Or is it three-fifths, or four-ninths? Who cares?

Originating that scintillating research this week was a bank pushing its own credit card. Is it really true that fear is driving us all towards a cashless society? Take a sneak look at the till in your local supermarket, then come back and tell me about it.

There's more: 95 per cent of the British public agreed with the proposition that their investments should help rather than harm the world. The poll was carried out on behalf of a firm which – oddly enough – offers a range of ethical investments.

Why are we personal finance journalists inundated by upwards of half a dozen similar mindless "opinion polls" each week?

There are a number of possible reasons. The first is that my colleagues and I are so stupid that any old rubbish will appear in our pages. By and large I discount that theory.

A second possible reason is that PR companies are themselves so stupid that they think we will fall for the dross they send us. I am more inclined towards that possibility.

Probably most compelling, however, is another argument. It is that the vast majority of financial products are the same. Variations are so minor that companies are forced into increasingly shrill attempts to sell their wares.

Ironically, when better products do appear, people flock to them. Look at Virgin's low-cost PEP. Or Direct Line, which led the way in car and home insurance. Or Nationwide, which cut the cost of its variable home loans last year and picked up business.

Or Sainsbury's, the supermarket chain, which offers a simple, no-frills savings account. Or Alliance & Leicester, which has just launched a credit card offering money-back discounts when you use it. There are other examples but they are far too few.

If these companies were to spend less time thinking up nonsensical ideas and concentrating on the simpler things in life, my life, and yours too, would be a lot better.

Dedicated readers of these pages will recall Paula Martin, the willing "victim" of our first financial makeover four weeks ago, who had been mis-sold a personal pension.

After the story appeared, Paula was offered compensation for her trouble from one company. Now the second one involved, Lincoln National, has been in touch to say her case will be resolved by them too.

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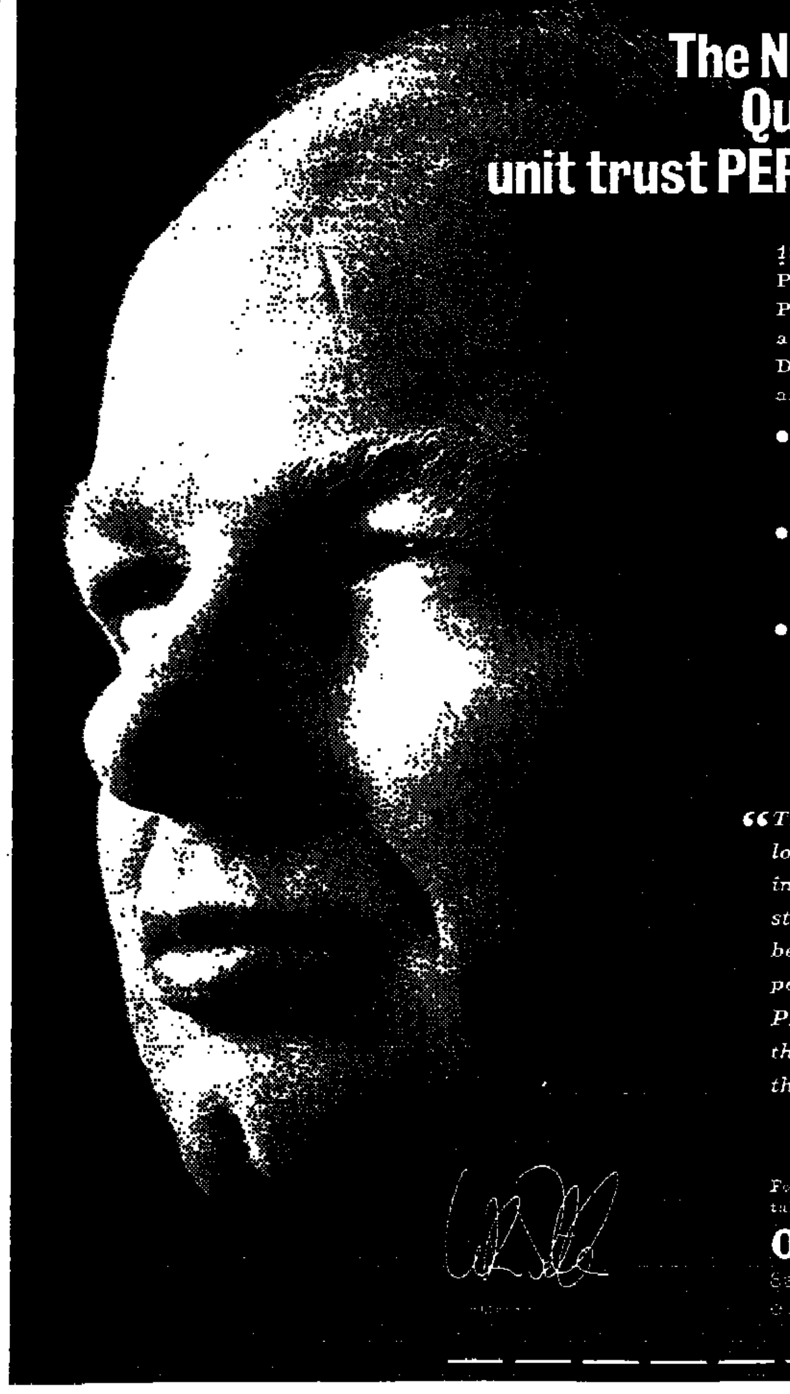

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Nothing ventured, no tax gained

Nic Cicutti on the advantages and pitfalls of investing in Venture Capital Trusts

Tax avoidance is a sport often favoured by those who earn so much money that they could probably afford to donate a few pounds to the Inland Revenue. But if you don't have to hand the taxman a chunk of your savings, why should you? Especially when there are ways of avoiding tax and making even more money at the same time. This is where Venture Capital Trusts (VCTs) come in.

VCTs, introduced by the Government two years ago, are similar to investment trusts. Their aim is to promote investment in relatively small, unquoted companies. Companies that qualify for investment must not be quoted on any stock market, except the Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

The beauty of VCTs is that, compared to investment trusts focusing on smaller companies, subscribers for new ordinary shares in the trust receive income tax relief set at 20 per cent, as long as they are held for at least five years. In effect, a £100,000 investment costs £80,000.

Income from the trust itself is tax-free, plus all gains at disposal. Furthermore, if shares are bought with the proceeds from the sale of an existing asset which may be liable to capital gains tax (CGT), this will allow the investor the right to "roll-over relief" – deferring payment of tax – on the asset.

While all capital gains made in the trust itself are tax-free, minimising those transferred into it involves selling the trust at a time when other losses can offset the original gain. Or, funds can be dribbled out after five years, up to the investor's annual CGT exemption.

Minimum investment in some trusts is just £3,000. The maximum investment against which full tax relief can be claimed is £100,000 per tax year. It is possible to invest in more than one trust, with tax relief applying to the combined investment. To receive the 20 per cent tax relief, shareholders must send the tax certificate they receive from the VCT company to the Inland Revenue. If the trust is sold within five years, the tax relief granted is repayable. There are also stringent criteria as to the qualifying areas trusts can invest in.

The question remains: which VCTs should investors be looking at? Last year, 12 trusts raised more than £160m and, according to the Aaron Partnership, a firm of financial advisers based in Milton Keynes, 10 of these are raising more money. David Aaron, a senior partner, says the key factor in picking the right trust is the experience of the manager investing in the smaller companies. Managers should also be in a position to choose between – and reject the majority of – deals offered to them.

Mr Aaron says: "Avoid companies that invest in too many start-up ventures because these have much higher risks. It is wise to spread the risk over three or four trusts. Choose the larger trusts for most of your investment, as they will give a bigger spread."

For investors who are prepared to accept high risks in return for potentially high returns, the Aaron Partnership recommends Guinness Flight and Murray Venture Trust VCTs.

The first is managed by Guinness Mahon Development Capital Flight, which has a proven record in unquoted company investments. From March 1984 to December 1995, GMDC achieved a compound return on realised investments of 39 per cent a year.

Murray Venture Trust VCT2 is managed by Murray Johnstone, which also has a long history of investing in small and medium-sized companies. Its management team places £1m a month in firms selected from hundreds of offers received.

Also recommended is British Smaller Companies VCT, a regional fund manager. Managed by Yorkshire Fund Managers, the firm has 10 years' experience in the sector and has consistently figured in the top quartile within its sector.

More conservative investors are pointed towards the Enterprise VCT and Close Brothers Protected VCT.

Both have 50 per cent of their assets guaranteed by high street banks, Enterprise additionally has 25 per cent of its funds invested in gilts.

Building from nothing: Start-ups may mean high risks PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD SYKES

Best borrowing rates

	Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	Fee	Incentive
FIXED RATES					
[illegible]					
Coventry BS	0800 126125	4.90% to 30/6/99	85	£250	—
[illegible]					
VARIABLE RATES					
[illegible]					
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	4.79% to 1/5/00	95	£295	Refund valn fee
[illegible]					
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES					
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	4.89% to 1/5/99	95	£395	—
[illegible]					
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	6.89% to 1/5/02	90%	£495	—
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE RATES					
[illegible]					
Greenwich BS	0181 858 8212	4.19% for 2 yrs	90	—	—
[illegible]					

	Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 yrs) With insurance	Without insurance
UNSECURED					
[illegible]					
Royal B of Scotland	0800 121125	14.0		£114.78	£101.45
[illegible]					
SECURED (SECOND CHARGE)				Max LTV Adv	Term
[illegible]					
Royal B of Scotland	0800 121121	9.0	70%	£2.5K-£100K	3 years to retirement
[illegible]					

	Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm	APR	Unauthorised % pm	APR
[illegible]						
Alliance & Leicester	0500 959595	Alliance	0.76	9.5	2.20	29.8
[illegible]						

	Telephone	Card Type	Min Income	Rate % pm	APR %	Annual Fee	Int. free period
STANDARD							
[illegible]							
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	—	0.79N	9.90N	nil	56 days
[illegible]							
GOLD CARDS							
[illegible]							
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	£20,000	0.79N	9.90N	nil	56 days
[illegible]							

	Telephone	Payment by direct debit % PM	APR	Payment by other methods % PM	APR
[illegible]					
Marks & Spencer	01244 681681	1.87	24.8	1.97	26.3
[illegible]					

APR Annualised percentage rate. B+C Buildings and Contents insurance LTV Loan to value ASU Accident, sickness and unemployment
E Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years.
H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged
N Introductory rate for a limited period.

All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677 13 March 1997

Best savings rates

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest paid
[illegible]						
Sainsbury's Bank	0500 405060	Instant Access	Instant	£1	5.75	Year
[illegible]						
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Save Direct	Instant	£5,000	5.50	Year
[illegible]						
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Select Instant	Postal	£5,000	6.35	Year
[illegible]						
Chelsea BS	0800 132351	POST-Int 20	20 day P	£5,000	6.85	Year
[illegible]						
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Select 60	60 day P	£10,000	6.50	Year
[illegible]						
Kleinwort Benson	0800 317477	HICA	Instant	£2,500	5.20	Month
[illegible]						
Halifax BS	01422 335333	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000	4.25	Quarterly
[illegible]						
Nationwide BS	0800 302010	Fixed Rate Bond	2 Year	£1,000	7.00F	Year
[illegible]						
Abbey National	0800 100801	Fixed Rate with feeder	5 years	£9,000	7.50F	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Fixed Rate with feeder	5 years	£8,575	7.50F	Year
[illegible]						
Abbey National	0800 100801	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.50F	Year
[illegible]						
Investec Bank (UK)	0171 626 0879	Premium TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.20	Year
[illegible]						
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 207 9007		1 year	£10,000	5.40FN	Year
[illegible]						
GE Financial Assurance	0181 380 3388		4 years	£20,000	6.00FN	Year
[illegible]						
N'castle Bank Gibraltar	00 350 76168	Nova Access	Instant	£5,000	6.00	Year
[illegible]						
Derbyshire (IOM) Ltd	01624 663432	90 Day Notice	90 day	£25,000	6.65	Year
[illegible]						
Investment Accounts			1 month	£20	4.75	Year
				£500	5.25	Year
				£25,000	5.50	Year
Income Bonds			3 months	£2,000	6.00	Month
				£25,000	6.25	Month
First Option Bonds			12 months	£1,000	6.00F	Year
				£20,000	6.25F	Year
Pensioner's G'teed Income Bond		Series 3	5 year	£500	7.00F	Month
Children's Bond		Issue H	5 year	£25	6.75F	Maturity

P postal only F fixed rate
N net rate A All withdrawals subject to 30 day loss of interest.
All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677. 13 March 1997.

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Get me out of this debt trap

Case study: Philippa Gee advises a mother of three

NAME: Patricia Olver
DATE OF BIRTH: 5-4-1949
OCCUPATION: Administration manager
BACKGROUND: Patricia is a single parent, with three children, Tara, Sophie and John, living in Berkshire. The last two are still financially dependent on her. She earns £17,500 per year and receives an additional £1,000 a month maintenance for the children from her former husband.

Patricia has a £30,000 interest-only mortgage, which is due to expire in 2011, backed by an endowment policy with Standard Life. She is paying off a number of debts, including a substantial credit card debit, plus home improvement and car loans. She has had a personal pension for the past seven years, into which she pays £210 a month.

THE AIM: Patricia is currently spending up to her income limit and wishes to manage her finances better, decreasing balances on her credit cards. She would also be interested in a better mortgage deal. Maintenance payments will halve in a year's time when Sophie leaves university, and Patricia wants to sort out her affairs to cope with this future loss of income. She also wants to set aside some £3,000 in savings and is relatively risk-averse.

THE ADVISER: Philippa Gee, a director of Gee & Co, fee-based financial planner in Shrewsbury, Shropshire (01743 236982).

THE ADVICE: The interest rates paid on the majority of your debts are excessive and should be immediately reduced. Equally, you have a variable interest rate mortgage and are exposed to potential rate rises. Total payments on your borrowings are currently in excess of £664 per month.

To remedy these concerns, I recommend you apply for a remortgage of £45,000 to cover all existing debts. You should lock into a competitive rate, fixed over a number of years. Nationwide currently offers 6.5 per cent fixed for two years. Your monthly costs would be reduced by nearly £450 to a more manageable initial level of £219.

As well reducing outgoings dramatically, this would give you a known monthly cost to allow you to control your expenditure more. Although this will help solve a lot of your short-term concerns, you should avoid additional borrowing in the future.

The existing mortgage endowment and family bond could repay the proposed new level of mortgage, although the progress of these should be monitored.

The endowment policy is still held in joint names and if you are to be the sole owner of this, Standard Life should be contacted to arrange completion of the relevant paperwork. The endowment is set to mature three years after the repayment date for your existing mortgage and therefore the new mortgage should be based on a slightly longer term to cover this.

We can now turn our attention to your other requirements. You realise that you will not be able to retire until age 65 or later. Based upon your existing provision (assuming contributions continue) and fund performance you could find yourself with a pension of approximately £12,000 or more in today's terms. In addition, you will receive the state pension from age 60.

Another concern is the absence of any savings. You would like to set aside a minimum of £3,000. As you appear to respond better to a strict savings mechanism rather than putting away whatever is left at the end of each month, I suggest a standing order to deduct a set amount every month.

You say that £100 could be saved each month. Together with the £450 released from your borrowings, you will quickly reach £3,000. This then allows you to consider other investments. I suggest either the Cheltenham & Gloucester 30-day notice postal account, currently paying 5.5 per cent gross, or the Scarborough Building Society instant access postal account currently paying 6 per cent gross.

Once this "float" has been set up, you should look each year to see how much of your residual savings are available to invest. Bearing in mind you have no existing investments I suggest you first arrange a Tessa, on a variable rate so that you benefit from future interest rates rises. A rate of 7 per cent is currently available through West Bromwich Building Society, giving a low-risk, tax-free return if held for the full five years.

Next you should consider a single lump sum payment into your pension. Although this will be tied up until retirement, you will obtain tax relief on your contributions and the fund will grow virtually free of tax. You could then consider starting a PEP. However, this would mean investing in equities, which do carry a certain risk. This might not, at least initially, comply with your cautious attitude to investments.

You are concerned about the reduction and eventual withdrawal of the maintenance payments. You do feel, however, that it is likely the children will find work during this period and will therefore be able to provide towards the costs of living at home. I suggest this need, if any, is met from the cash savings you will build up.

Additional life cover is not essential although as you are self-reliant you should consider the financial effects of ill health. You already have income protection and can easily add on to your pension a "waiver" costing around £11 per month, allowing your premiums to be maintained if you were unable to work after a six-month deferment period.

Although quite costly, critical illness cover is also worth consideration. This provides a lump sum on diagnosis of a number of serious illnesses. If we set the contract to cease at age 65, a monthly premium of £50 could provide cover of between £50,000 and £75,000, depending on cover preferred. You should also ensure that your will is promptly rewritten.

THE VERDICT: "I thought the advice was brilliant. I was very impressed with the way Philippa took a difficult problem, that of several debts at high interest rates and came up with a creative solution. The thought of remortgaging for more than at present was not something I had considered. Philippa's approach was extremely efficient and helpful."

Patricia Olver wanted to decrease her credit card balances and set aside some savings
PHOTOGRAPH: MARTYN HAYHOW

John Whiting

It's the end of the tax year, and time to make a resolution to give the Revenue less

The year-end is nigh. No, you've not been asleep since Christmas – it's the tax year-end that we are heading for. Traditionally, this is the moment to take stock of one's fiscal affairs – and perhaps make a few resolutions for next year.

The resolution most of us would like to make is to give the taxman less of what he craves for. Assuming you don't want to take the drastic step of earning less, there are ways to reduce the amount you contribute to the ever-open coffers of the Inland Revenue. Many are simple family fiscal housekeeping measures.

The key point to remember is that everyone has a personal allowance – £4,045 for the coming tax year – which is the tax-free amount every man, woman and child can have. Then income tax starts to bite – the first £4,100 of taxable income is at the 20 per cent rate before the individual moves on to the 23 per cent and later the 40 per cent rate.

So is there scope for you to share income with your spouse if he or she doesn't earn – or earns very little? Two obvious possibilities (assuming the wife is the non-earner) is to let her hold any investments or deposit accounts and so get the interest. Or look at employing her or taking her into the business if the husband is self-employed or has his own small company.

The same principles work if it's the husband who is the low or nil-earner, with the added point of looking at the married couple's allowance (MCA). That is only worth around £274 a year now, but is still worth having and it goes automatically to the husband unless the couple do something about it. It can be split or passed to the wife. The unmarried may be able to claim the additional personal allowance if there are children – this is worth the same as the MCA and again can be split in the best way.

And what of children's tax position? They too have their personal allowances, although any income which comes from an asset gifted by a parent is taxed on the parent if it exceeds £100 per annum. Mind you, other family members are not caught by this, so perhaps Granny can help and give them some income-producing assets? (Giving the kids loadsamoney now may not be what you want, so you may wish to refer back to a previous article in this series on trusts.)

In all cases, bear in mind that the non-taxpayer can register to get interest income gross rather than with tax deducted. Well worth getting the form from the building society, rather than trying to do a tax return.

Turning to Capital Gains Tax (CGT), similar principles apply of splitting holdings with your spouse. Then, could you "bed and breakfast" some shares to use up your annual exemption this year and give yourself a better base value for the future?

If you're lucky enough to have some share options, look carefully at their position – could you usefully exercise some now and realise gains in this tax year rather than next? (But make sure the profit will count as capital and not give rise to an income tax charge – some options will and that could ruin some careful planning.)

If we're into pre-year-end mode, don't forget Inheritance tax. If you have it in mind to give assets away, consider making a gift before 5 April 1997 if you haven't yet utilised your gift exemption of £3,000. And company car drivers should check whether that April business trip should fall before or after 5 April.

There is also a range of tax-free investments that you can go for, though many are not available to the children. Tessas are well known: the interest you receive will be tax free if you leave it in the account for five years. PEPs are very much in vogue: they give a tax-free environment for your shares and bonds. They still carry risks and costs, of course, but they can work as part of long term saving – perhaps earmarked for school fees? There is an annual PEP amount available – £6,000 for the basic PEP. Then there are National Savings opportunities available for all. We'll survey all this in a future article.

Don't forget the greatest tax shelter – pensions. Whatever changes might happen in the future, contributions now to approved schemes are tax deductible. There are limits to what you can toss in – typically 17.5 per cent of earnings, though the older (and here "older" can start at 36) can contribute more. If you have a personal pension scheme, check that you are making the most of the relief available. If you are in your employer's scheme there may still be scope for additional contributions.

John Whiting is tax partner at Price Waterhouse

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A good degree and a £20,000 debt

That's what today's sixth-formers can look forward to. Abigail Montrose and Ken Welsby report

When the parents of today's teenagers went to university, thoughts about money usually meant simply the grant – and how to make it last until the end of term.

If the cash ran out a couple of weeks before the vacation, there was always the chance of a couple of nights' work in the union bar – and of course a quick phone call home would often produce at least a modest cheque.

Today it's a different story. The value of the grant is *shrinking – and many* families on average incomes are shocked to discover that their children will no longer qualify for more than a nominal grant, if any.

To make matters worse, there is the growing fear that at least some universities may start to introduce tuition fees.

If you have a child who is now in the lower sixth, be aware that the prospectuses for September 1998 entry to six leading institutions – Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Nottingham and Bristol universities and the London School of *Economics – include a* "wealth warning".

In effect, they are saying to students and their parents: "We don't know if the Government will let us charge – but if it does, we probably will. If you won't be able to pay, don't bother applying."

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors – in effect university managing directors – are generally in favour of tuition fees. But Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of the Higher Education Funding Council, who is advising the government on the issue, has not yet committed himself in public. The truth is that there is still no clear idea of how student finances will work beyond the next *couple of years.*

But whether tuition fees arrive or not, the education world is unanimous in the view that higher education costs are rising – and that students and their families *will* have to foot a bigger share of the bill. As one admissions tutor put it this week: "The only sensible advice for parents is to plan for the worst."

Around 40 per cent of students have part-time jobs during term-time, and many more work every vacation. Yet 87 per cent of students still get into debt.

Increasingly, parents have *to contribute to the cost of* higher education. But what are the costs – and how much help can you expect from the Government?

At present students receive two forms of support from the state. The local education authority (LEA) will pay tuition fees to the institution and a maintenance grant direct to students to cover all their expenses.

The maintenance grant is means-tested and is based on the income of the parents. In the case of mature students, it is the individual and his or her partner to whom the means test is applied.

The maximum grant is £2,150 a year for students in London and £1,710 a year *elsewhere. The means test* operates broadly on the same lines as welfare benefits; it allows for household and family expenditure, and classes the remainder as residual income. If the parents have a joint residual income of £16,050 or more, the grant is reduced.

To supplement this, student loans are available. The maximum loan is £2,035 for students in London and £1,645 for students studying elsewhere.

The National Union of Students estimates that the minimum a student living *away from home can survive* on living in London is around £5,200 a year, and outside London the figure is £4,300. So even if a student received a full grant and the maximum loan, there would still be a shortfall.

In fact, many students do not qualify for the maximum grant, and many find their living expenses, which include accommodation, foods, books and travel, exceed the NUS minimum.

If the maintenance grant system is scrapped, as many expect it will be in the future, Barclays Bank estimates that the average student would owe £20,625 by the end of a three-year degree course.

Many would be put off going on to further education if they thought they would have to borrow this amount.

Increasingly parents are funding their children's education without expecting repayment. If the maintenance grant scheme is to be further reduced or even scrapped, parents may well need to start saving several years in advance.

The union bar: An extra expense on top of the estimated £6,000 a year cost for a student in a London hall of residence PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW BUURMAN

Lay a nest-egg offshore

Tony Lyons finds a tax-efficient strategy that doesn't involve Swiss banks

The issue of private education remains divisive – but many parents who opt for state education for their children at primary and secondary levels will be called upon to contribute to the cost of their university or college education.

Estimates of the likely bill for a university education vary widely, since the future funding of higher education is in the melting pot – but as an indication, the National Union of Students calculates that it costs a student £5,410 *a year to live in a London hall of residence*, and a figure of £6,000 would be realistic to cover the cost of books, meals and travel. Tuition fees, if they are introduced, would be several thousand more.

The challenge, then, for parents, is to find ways of covering such costs without breaking the bank. One unconventional but highly tax-efficient means of providing for such sums is to invest offshore.

This does not involve numbered accounts in secretive Swiss banks, or laundering money through tiny islands in the Caribbean. The reality is much more prosaic, and involves investment funds based in such decidedly unexotic locations as Luxembourg and Dublin.

Although unregulated by the UK authorities, so long as the investment is in an offshore subsidiary of one of the well-known fund management groups or life assurance companies, *there will be little more risk to capital* than with most other kinds of investment in managed funds.

Some offshore funds in fact put their money back into the UK. Edinburgh-based Murray Johnstone, for example, operates a fund which buys bonds and fixed-interest stock issued by banks with triple-A credit ratings – among the safest investments available.

Investing offshore in this way, a sizeable fund can be created for the payment of school fees or higher education costs.

While the charges are slightly higher than their mainland equivalents, because of their tax-free status the performance should more than compensate for this.

Offshore management groups invest free of UK income and capital gains tax. *This means that they can invest tax* free with the gains and income being reinvested to make the fund grow faster.

Individuals who invest offshore usually do so in roll-up funds, so called because the earnings are rolled up year after year, and drawn only when the investment is cashed.

The investors only become liable to income tax on the gains at the time of encashment – and even then, there are ways in which the tax liability can be minimised.

There are a couple of main methods of investing money offshore to pay for education, which apply equally to school fees or higher education costs.

If you are planning to pay fees some years ahead, the most straightforward means is investment in one of the many offshore funds now on offer. The investor faces a vast choice, everything from UK equities to Latin American specialists and currency funds.

A number of the leading management groups offer umbrella funds where investors face just one set of charges. They then have a choice of sub-funds to invest in, between which they can usually switch freely.

A typical example is Guinness Flight's International Accumulation Fund, launched in 1980, that has 14 *sub-funds* including a range of currency and bond funds as well as international and European equity funds.

The investment can then be cashed in as needed. Investors should note that they will be liable to income tax on any gains and will not benefit from the UK indexation rules on them. But if the encashment is on a phased basis to pay for school fees, the tax liability can be minimised.

Use of offshore funds can be particularly useful in providing money for children going to university. A parent or grandparent can set up a trust offshore in a child's name which will pay an allowance after their 18 birthday.

As the student is unlikely to have any other income, and taking advantage of the tax allowances, a significant proportion of the money can be received virtually tax-free.

Another method of using offshore investments is for low-rate taxpayers who need to pay school fees immediately and have a significant lump sum. They can buy an offshore annuity which will pay the costs of schooling and other expenses each term.

As annuity rates are continually fluctuating, an independent adviser with a knowledge of offshore annuities will be able to advise on how much is needed to purchase such an annuity.

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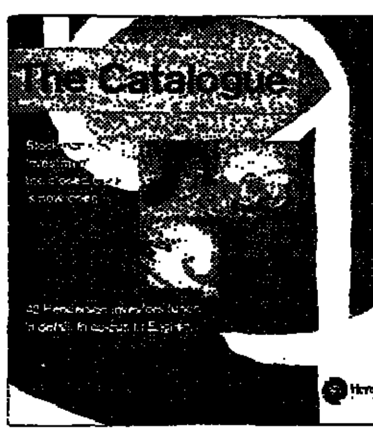

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Public schooling assured

Tony Lyons works out the best policies to pay the fees

The privileges some parents pay for: School fees for one child can cost upwards of £30,000

Parents considering educating their children privately need to be aware at the outset of the likely cost. Secondary schooling for just one child to the age of 16 could cost more than £30,000 as a day pupil – and at least double this if boarding is being considered.

Only a few are lucky enough to have trust funds that they can use. Many have grandparents with sufficient capital to fund school fees.

Yet well over half the parents and guardians who privately educate their children pay the fees themselves. Anyone considering this route needs to plan carefully – both to ensure that the funds are in place and to minimise the impact on the family's overall finances.

While there are different means of saving for school fees, schemes that depend entirely on stock market performance, which can go up or down in value, can leave the investor with a shortfall. Life assurance still offers one of the most important means of paying for private education for children – and grandchildren.

Life assurance can be used to save for future or immediate school fees. The earlier a scheme is set up, the cheaper it will be – a number of independent financial advisers earn their livelihood from selling specialist school-fee packages.

The simplest use of life assurance for early planning is to use a charitable trust to invest a lump sum. Although this has lost some of its tax advantages, it still offers a guaranteed way of paying the fees on a term basis.

In effect, the capital is used to buy an annuity which pays the fees direct to the school. A sum of £20,000 could provide around £30,000 worth of school fees over five years.

Most people, however, do not have the £20,000 to invest. In this case a conventional with-profits endowment can provide the answer.

Many private schools now follow the state system and provide secondary education from 11 rather than 13, as is the case with the more traditional boys' schools – so you can plan ahead on the basis of a conventional 10-year endowment policy taken out before a child is one year old. This will then provide a lump sum when the child is 11.

The clever parent should use the proceeds of the policy to negotiate with the school to pay all the educational fees – at least to 16 – in one lump sum. Most schools will discount charges, or at the very least any future increases in their fees, if they are offered a one-off lump sum payment.

The benefits of conventional with-profits life assurance are twofold. Firstly, they offer generous life cover. Secondly, once declared, the annual bonus – expressed as a percentage of the sum assured – cannot be taken away or reduced. While these tend to be quite low, the bulk of the maturity value is the terminal bonus, paid to reflect the life office's performance over the whole period of the policy.

Even though the values of the terminal bonus on 10-year policies have fallen in recent years as inflation has come under control, it still forms a significant proportion of the maturity proceeds, usually over a third of the value.

Today, a 30-year-old paying £100 a month into a 10-year with-profits policy can expect a good life assurance company to forecast a maturity value in excess of £18,000. The actual value will depend on the performance of the underlying investments.

What of those who cannot plan ahead or decide for whatever reason to send a child to private school without any savings in advance? Paying fees out of income is very expensive.

There are ways of financing education by spreading the payments over the term of a life assurance policy or by taking out a mortgage.

Ecclesiastical Insurance, for example, will lend up to 75 per cent of the value of a property for school fees with a life assurance policy being used to repay the loan before the borrower retires. Many building societies offer similar schemes allowing mortgages to be increased up to the normal valuation level.

Shorter-term loans, usually for 10 years, are also available from the specialist insurance brokers such the School Fees Insurance Agency. These are usually arranged with a bank and are repaid with a 10-year with-profits life assurance policy taken out with one of the better-performing companies such as Friends Provident.

The borrower draws down the school fees each term from the bank. In return a monthly sum, dependent on age at the outset, is invested in an endowment policy that is used to repay the loan after 10 years. Meanwhile, interest is paid on a the outstanding loan at a preferential rate, usually a couple of points over the bank's base rate.

Monthly payments will therefore start quite low but would go on rising until the end of the school fees when they will stabilise. At the end of 10 years, the loan will be repaid out of the policy's maturity value. Because life offices are conservative in their forecasts of future values, the borrower should find a small capital sum left over.

The earlier the planning for school fees, the cheaper it becomes. But even for those who do not plan ahead, life assurance can provide a means of spreading the cost.

Some useful phone numbers

IFA Promotion	01179 711177 Will give you details of three independent financial advisers in your area; ask for specialists in school fees and/or investments
Barclays	0800-374 373. Free guide on the cost of putting children through higher education
Dept of Education and Employment	0171-510 0150 Detailed information on student grants – including the means test rules – and loans
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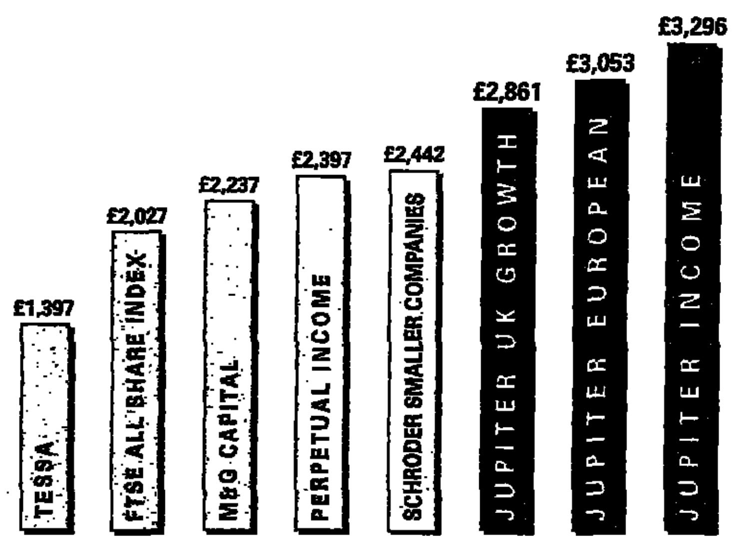

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Passing the final hurdle

Abigail Montrose and Ken Welsby consider the options for meeting further education costs

Parents can save towards meeting the costs of higher education in a variety of ways. The three main factors to consider are the amount you can afford to save each month or year, the age of your children and the amount you want to raise.

The simplest option is to put a regular amount in the building society each month: those with five years or more to save can save in a tax-exempt account (Tessa), which means all interest on their savings would be tax-free at the end of five years.

For those prepared to take some risk, investing in the stock market offers more potential. The most tax-efficient way to do this is through a personal equity plan (PEP), which shelters any growth or income from the shares from tax.

There are hundreds of PEP schemes which would be appropriate savings vehicles, some requiring an investment of as little as £20 a month. Most of them invest your savings in unit trusts, which are ideal for newcomers to the idea of investing in shares since the decisions on which shares to buy and sell – and, just as importantly, when to do so – are taken by experts whose judgement generally will beat that of the armchair investor.

Barclays Unicorn has just reduced the minimum investment on its PEP to £20 to encourage people to save for their children's higher education through their scheme.

To illustrate how such an investment would grow, if you had a child in 1980, and had put all your child benefit payments month by month into a fund such as Barclays Unicorn General Trust, you would now have about £18,000 towards your teenager's higher education.

It's important to remember that the value of unit trusts – like all stock market investments – will fluctuate. So this is a savings route to consider with children in their early teens or younger.

Certainly, to take advantage of a unit trust's full potential you should try to leave your money invested for at least five years. If, by chance, you have a lump sum – perhaps a bonus from work or a recent windfall – remember that you can invest up to £6,000 for each tax year in a PEP.

So you can put £6,000 into a plan this month for the 1997/98 tax year, and do the same again at any time in the following tax year. Or you could make a lump sum payment now and then start a regular savings plan from April onwards.

With so many PEPs to choose from, which one will be suitable to save for higher education? Since your goal is to make your money grow between now and when your child reaches 18, look at PEPs investing in unit trusts which specifically aim for capital growth, rather than those which aim to pay out a regular income.

Unit trusts are grouped in various sectors according to how and where they invest. But not all unit trusts can be held in a PEP – in simple terms it must be one which invests mainly in the UK and continental Europe.

Prayers may help: but forward investments should not be discounted PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLA KURTZ

The bad news is that some of the top performing unit trusts do not qualify for tax-free PEP status because they invest mainly in the US or the Far East. The good news is that those which invest nearer home are generally seen as safer bets for the small investor.

One of the good PEP-able growth sectors of the last five years has been UK Smaller Companies. £1,000 invested five years ago in the top-performing fund in this sector (Hill Samuel) would be worth about £3,360 today, assuming you had not touched any of the income. Other good performers which invest in UK smaller companies include unit trusts from Britannia, Invesco, Morgan Grenfell and Schroder.

If, instead, you had looked at funds investing in Europe, £1,000 invested in the top-of-the-table Old Mutual would have been worth £3,160. Also worth a look in this sector are the funds from Jupiter and Gartmore.

Many of these funds will sell to you directly by telephone, but you must remember that the person on the other end, however he may describe himself, is really in the business of selling a product.

If you are uncertain about any aspect of investing in a managed fund, or you simply want some specialist help in finding the right fund to meet your needs, you should talk to an independent financial adviser. When you talk to an IFA he or she will take you through a detailed enquiry into your finances – known as a fact-find – to be sure that you are getting the right advice.

It's also worth noting that some of the good performing unit trusts are not marketed directly, and are generally available only through IFAs and stockbrokers.

You should also be aware that not all funds offer monthly savings plans; some want minimum lump sums of at least £1,000 or more. Again, this is the sort of information that an IFA will have at his fingertips.

PEPs are not the only tax-free investments. Others include friendly society schemes, which are geared to the needs of modest savers. British Benefit Friendly Society has just launched its Education Plan. For as little as £15 a month you can build up a tax-free lump sum which your child can then use to help them repay a student loan or any other debts which may build up in further education.

University challenge

Parents who had to learn the hard way talk to Ken Welsby

News that the student teacher hired to coach John Gummer's daughter in Latin had worked in a Soho "clip joint" to pay off her debts will have sent shivers down many parents' spines.

"It was easy money," Selina Merryfield said of her work as a hostess encouraging foreign businessmen to buy champagne and sandwiches for £70–£100 a time. The lesson to be drawn from this story is that parents can provide their student offspring with easy money without putting them in moral danger – simply by planning ahead.

Dr Martin Kavanagh, an automotive design engineer, is determined his children Harriet and Martin should not have to suffer as he did as a student in Birmingham in the early 1970s: "In my second year I was in digs with no bathroom and usually no hot water – and for the last three weeks of every term I lived on a diet of beans, chips and cocoa."

When his children were eight he took out 10-year endowment policies, each costing £20 a month, which would mature when they were in the sixth form.

"It was a real pain at the time; £40 a month going out when we could only just afford it," he recalled. "In fact, when I was made redundant from British Leyland, there were a few months when we couldn't manage it – but my father and mother-in-law chipped in to keep the policy going. Two years ago we collected about £4,000 on the policy for Harriet before she went off to Edinburgh and we will do about the same for Martin this year.

"It will be particularly helpful in his case because he wants to do a European engineering degree, which will probably take four years and involve living in France for half the time. So, obviously, the costs will be higher."

Students often find that landlords will take advantage of their need for cheap accommodation, and this is an area where parental provision can be particularly helpful in helping their children escape from difficult circumstances.

After two years of living in flats which were virtually unheated and with a water heater which more than once burst into flames, Bea Marshall and Jackie Macdonald took drastic action to improve their standard of living for their final year in Manchester.

"We were paying almost £40 a week each to live in a slum," Bee said. "To be honest, I'd have given it up rather than face another year." They decided to find rented property on the open market, rather than through student channels. This year they are sharing a modern, two-bedroom flat on a one-year lease with the option to renew for a further year if they stay on for postgraduate work.

"It's a lot more expensive – £60 a week each, but just the thought of being able to take a shower in hot water every day makes it worth every penny," Jackie said.

Her parents, who were horrified at the standard of their previous accommodation, agreed to pay the deposit and guarantee the rent, provided the girls found part-time work to contribute their share of the cost.

In the event both girls worked 12 hours a day, six days a week throughout last summer as cocktail bar waiters in London's West End – and did the same again in the run-up to Christmas.

Jackie's father, Andrew, confesses that he had given no thought to the cost of higher education until his daughter was leaving school – at which point he was shocked to discover that they did not qualify for a grant. Fortunately, as a self-made businessman, he had some money put by in shares and unit trusts which he has been cashing in at intervals to pay college bills.

"In the late 1970s and 1980s I was always doing deals," he said. "I never went out without £500 in my wallet – but I never thought of long-term investment until I was into my 40s when I met some stockbrokers at a race meeting."

Now, with an eye to the future education of his 13-year-old son, he is putting a lump sum each year into PEPs. "I just wish I had known earlier what education was going to cost," he said.

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☐ Beauty and the Beast ☐ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

What is the capital city of Israel?
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TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON TV, WHERE TO GO AND WHEN, READ THE EYE TODAY

Serena Mackesy
In my week

Show me someone who hates smoking at parties and I'll show you someone who's never been to a really good party

There are those sublime moments when the world throws you the chance to use a line and you catch it, one-handed, without looking, and pitch it back. Okay, so it was a stolen line: Saint Sharon of the Stones said it first in *Diabolique*, but the satisfaction went deep. We were feeling a bit yawny because we'd just sat through *The Crucible*. David was having a wazz and we were standing on the stairs by the ash-tray waiting for him.

We were discussing Daniel Day-Lewis. His appearance had saved me from falling asleep altogether by inspiring an attack of the giggles. It's that Irish thing. It's gone beyond a joke. It's fine wanting to be Irish: I have occasional urges to dig out me old granda's birth certificate myself. Artists don't pay tax, the bars are great and they've got the coolest capital city in the world after Valetta. But Dan's taken it beyond that: he's not content just with having the Nationality and developing a bit of a brogue: he is transforming himself into George Best. The similarity is getting stronger all the time: the scruffy beard, the bad haircuts, the highly-coloured nose. All the way through *The Crucible*, I kept expecting him to throw down his rake and shout: "for f***'s sake bring me a bottle of whisky and the shortlist for this year's Miss World".

Sam was going "Did you notice the miracle, by the way?"

"No. What miracle?"

"The teeth. Didn't you see? They kept changing. I mean, he had these nice, white, shiny English – sorry, Irish – middle-class teeth all the way through, and then when he got his soliloquy at the end they'd turned green and stumpy and he kept frothing through them."

"Yes. I did."

"And then, when they hanged him, he'd got the old ones back. There wasn't a gob of spittle when he was saying the Our Father."

"Well, you can't spit when you're praying."

"It's amazing," said Sam. "Redemption as orthodontist. I could have saved thousands of pounds on the boys' teeth."

"They'd have to sincerely repent first."

"Oh, they'd probably have done it like a shot if they'd thought it would make girls fancy them."

And then Taupe Woman came up. She had one of those "I've got children and I haven't got time for frivolity" haircuts, and an expression like someone who has just tried hundred-year eggs for the first time. "Excuse me," she said. "Mmm?" we turned to her. "Do you know what day this is?" she said. Sam and I had to think for a moment, days of the week not being so important to the self-employed. "It's Wednesday," said Sam. "No," said Taupe Woman. "It's National No Smoking Day."

A moment's silence. "How can you smoke, today of all days?" said Taupe Woman. "Sorry," said Sam. "Not my belief system. I drink during Ramadan, too." "Well, it's disgusting," said Taupe Woman, "a disgusting habit". "That," I said, "is a matter of opinion." I have had a long, loving, romantic relationship with the cigarette, and people trying to part me from my babies only makes me more determined to hang on to them.

Taupe Woman tried another tack. "Well, if you don't care about yourselves," she said, "you should think about the rest of us. Don't you realise your smoke can kill other people?"

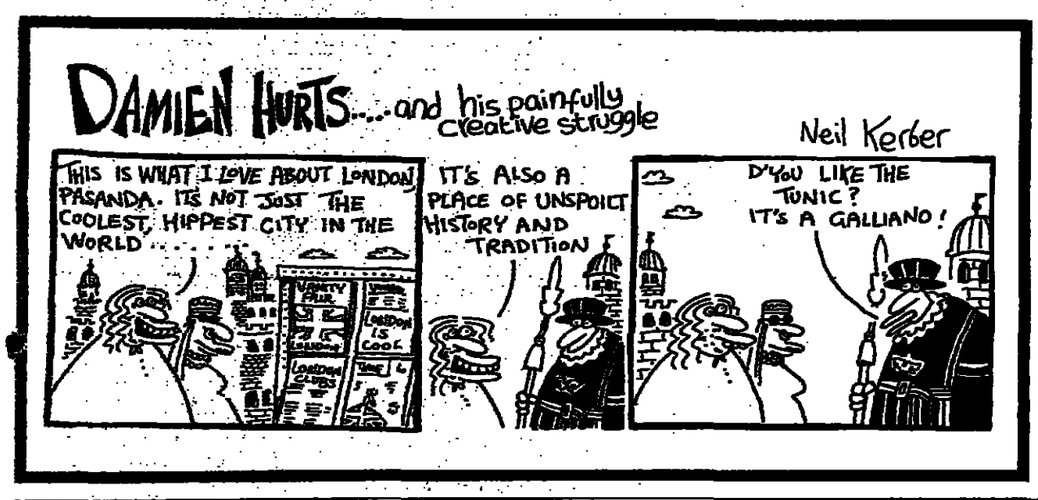
Which was where I offered a prayer of thanks to Saint Sharon. I took a deep drag, looked her hard in the eye, exhaled. "Sadly," I said, "It's not a reliable method."

Year by year, National No Smoking Day has gone belly up in a cloud of nonentity and I've finally worked out why: it's because smoking is a taupe issue, not a health one. Show me someone who wants smoking banned in public places and I'll show you someone who has said to a colleague: "I'm really tired. We were up 'til one o'clock last night playing Trivial Pursuit." Show me someone who hates smoking at parties and I'll show you someone who's never been to a really good party.

I mean, think about the kind of mind that could say "I know. We'll take a group of people who are counter-suggestible enough to light up while watching *ER*, and we'll invent a day dedicated to not doing one of their most pleasurable activities. They'll all want to join in because they won't want to be left out."? Only a taupe person could think that a day posited on a negative could be a success. Days that work are based on positives: Armistice Day (promotion of peace); World Aids Day (promotion of the alleviation of suffering); International Women's Day (celebrating the existence of a superior species). Put "no" into a title and that's the reaction you get. I know half a dozen non-smokers who make a point of doing it on March 12.

Taupe Woman and I stared at each other across the gulf of nothing-in-common. Everyone needs role models, and I suppose it's inevitable that someone, somewhere would choose Anne Diamond. Sam pushed her glasses up her nose, smiled, said nothing. David emerged from the boys' room, and Taupe Woman's husband walked out behind him, pulling a woolly scarf from a Sainsbury's carrier bag. "We'd better go," he said. "It's after 11 o'clock. What did you think of the film?"

She followed him down the stairs. "Very good," she said. "And Daniel Day-Lewis was so convincing."



The (English) language barrier

Robert Hanks
the week on radio

You have to feel some sympathy for Patricia J Williams: arriving in Britain to deliver the **Reith Lectures** (Radio 4, Tuesday), supposedly one of the peaks of intellectual life in this country, she must have expected to be treated with respect, or at least simple courtesy. And what happens? First the tabloids, outraged by the notion of a black American woman lecturing us about the politics of race, denounce her as a political extremist. Then she gets roughed up by Melvyn Bragg on **Start the Week** (admittedly, it was quite a mild beating by his standards – Jean Aitchison, last year's lecturer, really felt the rough side of his tongue, and not in a nice way – but Professor Williams seemed understandably disconcerted). And to add insult to injury, one of the "qualities" dismisses what she said to Bragg as nonsense and offers prizes to any reader who can make sense of one of her sentences – a little unfairly since, as all journalists know, sentences that make perfect sense when spoken conversation, when transcribed can look like gibberish.

So when she finally got to the starting-line, I was ready to root for her. And after three weeks, it's disappointing to have to admit that these lectures are really not very good. Actually, Reith Lectures hardly ever are very good; it's an extraordinarily difficult form to bring off successfully – even the geneticist Steve Jones, a dazzlingly sharp and amusing interviewee in the run-up to his Reith Lectures a few years ago, when it came to the point, was rather dull.

But to the exigencies of form, you have to add some problems peculiar to Professor Williams. Too many of her sentences are either impenetrably dense or ungraspably vague – what precisely is "an assimilative tyranny of neutrality as self-erasure"? (Quick now, there's another sentence coming up. You don't get any time to think about this.) This is partly to do with the fact that her brand of English is subtly alien to English ears. In her first lecture, talking about her young son's apparent inability to identify colours, she said: "I began to suspect some social complication in which he somehow was invested." *Invested*? You see what she means; but it's an odd word to use, and at other points context doesn't supply you with enough information to make sense of the oddities.

The story about her son's supposed colourblindness (apparently, he'd just taken to heart the repeated insistence of white liberal teachers that "colour doesn't matter") also highlighted another problem: she is not a very good story-teller, stripping her illustrative anecdotes of circumstantial detail so that they feel notional, abstract, implausible. At the same time, she has a weakness for over-extended metaphor and overblown rhetorical flights that can leave the sensitive listener wincing.

That's a shame, because the arguments lurking in the verbal fog are straightforward and important. Her fundamental point is this: black people see racism as a tremendous problem, white people don't. Isn't this gap in perception worrying?

In this country, in particular, racism is frequently dismissed as a problem that happens elsewhere – an example of this tendency was this week's **Document**, "Chocolate Soldier from the USA" (Radio 4, Thursday), which looked at the disproportionate number of black GIs hanged for raping white women in the Second World War. Throughout the programme, US racism was contrasted with the open-mindedness of the British – which may be reasonable, but also sounded self-congratulatory. Professor Williams makes it clear that race is not a subject we can afford to be comfortable about: and perhaps the fact that the media in this country have tried so hard to make her feel uncomfortable is all the confirmation she needs.

And the world laughs with you

Jasper Rees
the week on television

There wasn't much evidence of the pulpit in *BallykissDibley* (BBC1, Fri), last night's blind date between two primetime priests, but more than enough elsewhere in **Comic Relief**'s order of service. The biannual task of the Red Nose festivities is to find a satisfactory compromise between entertainment and consciousness-raising. The biannual task of columns such as this one is to express the worry, which may or may not be widely felt, that a grab-bag of Hancocks and Deaytons has no business parading a conscience that their daily work requires them to conceal.

There was a particularly monstrous example of this critical stance in another newspaper's review of the first instalment of *Balls to Africa* (BBC1, Sun, Mon, Tues). It imputed the basest of limelight-seeking motives to the messy ménage of celebrities assembled for a football tour of West Africa. They were described as "embarrassingly available" and "second-rate" by a reviewer the memory of whose witty radio stuntwork has been all but eclipsed by the widely noted brevity of his own career in TV. How second-rate is "second-rate"? Better than having no rating at all.

In fact, the now established tradition of comedians reporting from the front line of deprivation is part of a much wider trend in TV. Celebrity involvement buys an audience for documentaries that would normally be given a wide berth. They may be about feeding the world or feeding the intellect (remember Terry Jones on the crusades?) but the same rules apply. It speaks far less well of the viewer than the viewed that this should be so. We're the invertebrates for needing to be led by the hand towards our own wallets, or our own enlightenment, by people who make us laugh.

If there was a slackness to *Balls to Africa*, it took the refreshing form of an admission, albeit unspoken, that these celebrities didn't know precisely what good they were doing. Frank Skinner stood in a swarm of giggling "Africans", as the beneficiaries of our charity are generically known in this sort of film, and reckoned it was "great that they're doing gags". That summed up the almost childlike paucity of his world view, in which the punchline looms larger than the poverty line. But it was a welcome retreat from the holy know-all style of some previous Comic Relief films.

The tendency in Comic Relief programming to sentimentalise "Africans", with the help of slow-motion and plangent soundtracking, is not inflicted on "the homeless". Lenny Henry's brief in *Walk On By* (BBC1, Wed) was to present his street-sleeping subjects as individuals. Genetically programmed to be larger than life, he suppressed his own personality wherever loudness was inappropriate, but skilfully used it wherever possible to coax the personality out of others. In one scene, he helped Jason, a boy with a periodic heroin problem, to sell the very newspaper that carried this week's critique of Comic Relief's impure philanthropy. (In a rather choice irony, the punters all wanted him to autograph the front page.) Jason eventually felt familiar enough with Henry to admit that he always switched over when *he* was on.

Jason also took a camera crew to Canterbury to show them his childhood haunts. "Who'd want to film you?" a friend, passing by, asked incredulously. The glamour models on **Kilroy** (BBC1, Thurs) didn't have the answer to much the same question. Most of the women participating in this studio investigation into nude modelling were thinking in terms of a future in TV presenting. However, television is a prudish medium. "I've got a degree," said one woman from under uniform white hair. "But I can't get a job as a presenter. Perhaps at Channel X, but not Carlton." So there we have it: rejected by the channel widely regarded as the lowest of terrestrial low, but granted a free screen test by *Kilroy*.

As an act of wholly inappropriate charity, it was matched only by the plug for a moribund pop group in **The Queen Phenomenon** (C4, Mon). Channel 4 ought to set up an inquiry to find out how this one managed got through its defences. Perhaps it happened the day Michael Grade was handing in his resignation. MTV had presumably discarded it as insufficiently rigorous. The film was made by a rum-sounding pair called Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher. "Europeans". Who needs them?

Whatever happened to...

Rock 'n' Roll

1957 Coffee houses, jukeboxes, jiving in swirling skirts, writhing, and diving. The sexual follows the rock 'n' roll revolution as Britain shakes to the new sound. Freedom of expression: how to be young and active. Riots hail the first arrival of Bill Haley from the US on these shores. Forty years ago this month he was rocking around the clock to the screams of a nation's eager young womanhood

Fight back From the black rhythm 'n' blues sounds shipped into the Mersey the Beatles export back a new version. The US goes wild on their first tour in 1964. Being more famous than Jesus challenges a mere King (Elvis). They also have all the best tunes.

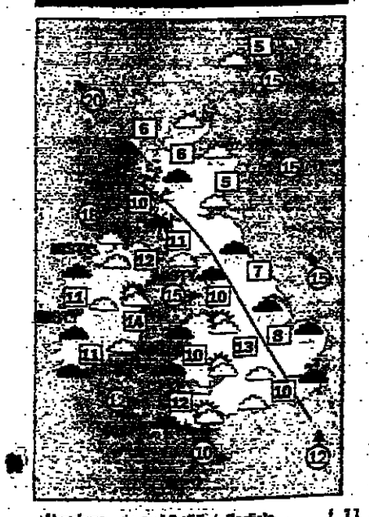
Pardon? However, by the 1967 *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band* album they've gone from being nice young men in suits to hippies in huge floral print shirts. From being chippy and chirpy to choral and curious. Old-style rock 'n' roll seems to have disappeared. Groups bring out albums inspired by drugs and flower power culture.

Get real Into the 1970s, and we did. The gentle tones of California grooving turned to glam rock – all high heels and high notes – and punk.

By the 1990s Rock is splintered into many factions: house, garage, ambient, jungle, rap. And that's just dance. Guitar-based rock has a collection of golden oldies at the helm. Next week, Bill Haley's Comets perform in Berlin. The Beatles sold more records last year than ever before. Poetry, cookery, anything is the "new rock 'n' roll", but not music. Yet *The Daily Mail* recently spoke of "the insidious, amoral influence of much modern music". Rock 'n' roll must still be with us ... but it helps if you are over 40.

James Aufenast

WEATHER



The British Isles

General Situation and 5-Day Outlook:

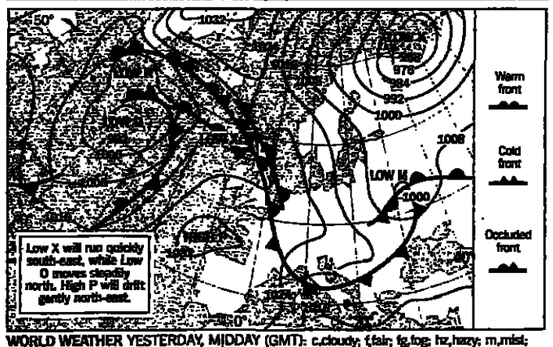
Scotland and its islands will be cloudy with most places getting some rain, and it will be foggy over the hills. However, Shetland may well stay dry all day. Northern Ireland should get some hazy sunshine, but there will be a lot of cloud, and also some drizzle to the west. England and Wales will mostly cloudy with rain and drizzle while western hills are foggy, but the Midlands should get some hazy sunshine this afternoon.

Sunday will see a lot of cloudy, misty weather with rain to the north and drizzle to the west. However, central and eastern areas should get some warm hazy sunshine. More cloudy weather and rain is expected over northern Scotland during Monday and Tuesday. Elsewhere, it looks like being essentially dry with some sunshine, but there will be a lot of cloud drifting around. Showers are then likely to break out almost anywhere during Wednesday, while northern Scotland stays wet.

Aberdeen	c	13	55	Carlisle	f	11	52	Isles of Scilly	c	11	52
Anglesey	f	12	54	Cork	dr	12	54	Jersey	c	11	52
Ayr	c	10	50	Dover	f	11	52	Lincoln	f	12	54
Belfast	c	1	34	Dublin	c	11	52	Liverpool	c	11	52
Birmingham	sh	12	54	Edinburgh	f	13	55	Lizard	c	11	52
Blackpool	c	9	48	Exeter	c	12	54	London	c	14	57
Bournemouth	f	12	54	Glasgow	f	11	52	Manchester	c	10	50
Brighton	c	14	57	Guernsey	s	12	54	Newcastle	f	13	55
Bristol	c	12	54	Inverness	c	12	54	Nottingham	sh	10	50
Cardiff	f	11	52	Ipswich	c	12	54	Oxford	s	13	55

Plymouth	f	12	54	Florence	s	17	63	Nice	s	15	59
Ronaldsway	c	11	52	Frankfurt	c	10	50	Nicosia	f	18	64
Scarborough	f	15	59	Geneva	s	14	57	Paris	c	11	52
Shrewsbury	c	11	52	Gibraltar	s	17	63	Prague	f	14	57
Southampton	c	12	54	Helsinki	f	1	34	Reykjavik	s	-4	25
Southend	f	13	55	Hong Kong	c	25	77	*Rio de Jan.	f	36	97
St Andrews	f	13	55	Istanbul	s	8	46	Riyadh	dr	20	68
Stornoway	c	11	52	Jerusalem	c	11	52	Rome	s	16	61
Tiree	c	11	52	Jo'burg	c	21	70	Singapore	s	31	88
York	c	13	55	K. Lumpur	c	32	90	Stockholm	s	3	37
				Lisbon	s	20	68	Sydney	f	22	72
				*Los Angeles	c	16	61	Tenerife	s	24	75
				Madrid	s	19	66	Tiree	c	11	52
				Majorca	s	17	63	Tokyo	s	17	63
				Malta	f	17	63	Venice	s	17	63
				Melbourne	f	19	66	Vienna	f	15	59
				Moscow	c	4	39	Warsaw	c	10	50
				Munich	s	14	57	*Washington	f	9	48
				*New York	f	1	34	Wellington	s	20	68

Europe and The World



WORLD WEATHER YESTERDAY, MIDDAY (GMT): c,cloudy; f,fair; fg,fog; hz,hazy; m,mist; r,rain; sn,snow; s,sunny; th,thunder *previous day's figure at local time.

Amsterdam	dr	9	48	Florence	s	17	63	Nice	s	15	59
Athens	s	17	63	Frankfurt	c	10	50	Nicosia	f	18	64
Auckland	c	21	70	Geneva	s	14	57	Paris	c	11	52
Bangkok	f	37	99	Gibraltar	s	17	63	Prague	f	14	57
Barcelona	s	18	64	Helsinki	f	1	34	Reykjavik	s	-4	25
Beirut	f	17	63	Hong Kong	c	25	77	*Rio de Jan.	f	36	97
Belgrade	f	13	55	Istanbul	s	8	46	Riyadh	dr	20	68
Berlin	c	11	52	Jerusalem	c	11	52	Rome	s	16	61
Bombay	hz	32	90	Jo'burg	c	21	70	Singapore	s	31	88
Brussels	r	9	48	K. Lumpur	c	32	90	Stockholm	s	3	37
Budapest	f	15	59	Lisbon	s	20	68	Sydney	f	22	72
*B. Aires	s	25	77	*Los Angeles	c	16	61	Tenerife	s	24	75
Cairo	c	19	66	Madrid	s	19	66	Tiree	c	11	52
Cape Town	s	27	81	Majorca	s	17	63	Tokyo	s	17	63
Casablanca	s	19	66	Malta	f	17	63	Venice	s	17	63
Christchurch	f	19	66	Melbourne	f	19	66	Vienna	f	15	59
Copenhagen	c	9	48	Moscow	c	4	39	Warsaw	c	10	50
Corfu	c	14	57	Munich	s	14	57	*Washington	f	9	48
Darwin	s	31	88	*New York	f	1	34	Wellington	s	20	68

AA Roadwatch

London. A306 Hammersmith Bridge. Closed both ways to general traffic for structural works. Expect congestion on both sides of the river.

M1 J2 Hendon area. Major roadworks at Five Ways Corner, with no access to or from the A1 Great North Way.

Bristol, M5 J18-19. Contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour delays.

West Midlands, A34. Major roadworks on Stratford Road, Sparkhill. No entry into Highgate Road. Regular delays expected.

M1 West Yorkshire. J47 Leeds (M621/A653 Holbeck), long-term roadworks with speed limits down to 30mph. Delays on the M1, M621 and Dewsbury Road.

City of Edinburgh, M8 J2. Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout at J2 (Newbridge Spur).

Greater Manchester, A6 Hazel Grove. Roadworks northbound. Also M63 J10. Southbound entry slip closed.

Tyne & Wear, A19 Moor Farm. Major roadworks. Expect queues.

Out and about with AA Roadwatch call **0336 401** for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 39p per min (cheap rate) 49p per min (all other times) inc VAT.

Sun and Moon

Sun rises 6:15am
Sun sets 6:05pm

Moon rises 10:02am
Moon sets 12:52am

Full moon: March 24

Lighting-up Times

Today			Tomorrow		
London	6:05pm	to 6:12am	London	6:07pm	to 6:10am
Bristol	6:13pm	to 6:22am	Bristol	6:17pm	to 6:20am
Birmingham	6:12pm	to 6:20am	Birmingham	6:14pm	to 6:17am
Manchester	6:13pm	to 6:21am	Manchester	6:15pm	to 6:19am
Newcastle	6:10pm	to 6:19am	Newcastle	6:12pm	to 6:17am
Glasgow	6:20pm	to 6:30am	Glasgow	6:23pm	to 6:27am
Belfast	6:28pm	to 6:36am	Belfast	6:30pm	to 6:34am

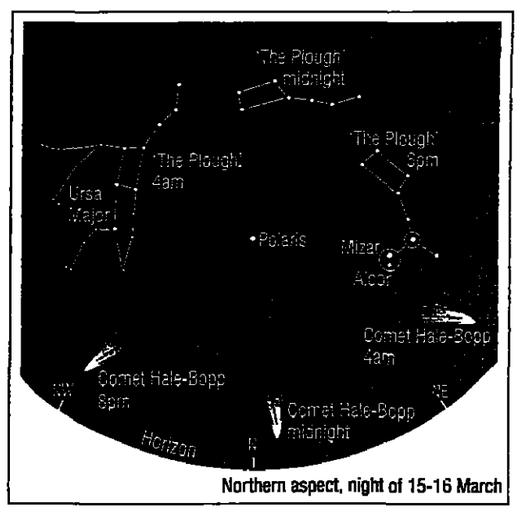
Air Quality

Yesterday's Readings	NO_2	SO_2	Outlook for Today	NO_2	SO_2
London	Good	Good	London	Good	Good
S England	Good	Good	S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good	Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good	C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good	N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good	Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good	N Ireland	Good	Good

High Tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	5.50	6.9	18.16	6.5
Liverpool	3.18	8.5	15.47	8.2
Avonmouth	11.16	11.6	23.31	11.2
Hull (Albert Dock)	10.33	6.7	23.01	6.6
Greenock	4.29	3.4	16.49	3.3
Dun Laoghaire	3.56	3.6	15.31	3.6

The Sky at Night



Northern aspect, night of 15-16 March

One of the most familiar of northern constellations, the Great Bear (Ursa Major), sweeps high overhead over the course of the night at this time of year. The seven stars of the Plough (or Big Dipper) are just the brightest asterism in a constellation that sprawls over a much larger area. In a dark sky, you can see fainter stars outlining the bear's head and paws. Unlike real bears, the celestial species – both Great and Little – sport tails. The "handle" of the Plough doubles as the Great Bear's tail. Test your visual acuity, and/or sky quality, by looking for Alcor, fainter companion to Mizar, next but last star in the Plough handle. Like the Great Bear, Comet Hale-Bopp is currently placed so it circles the pole and never sets for observers at UK latitudes, but it is easiest to see soon after dusk or just before dawn.

Jacqueline Mitton

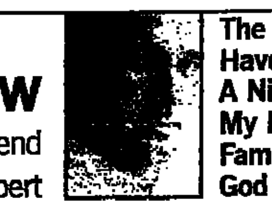
The big picture

To Have and Have Not
Sat 4.40pm BBC2

Whereby the 19-year-old Lauren Bacall slouched across the big screen for the first time, as the *New Yorker*'s Pauline Kael put it, "and managed to make the question 'Anybody got a match?' sound like the most insolent and insinuating of demands". Howard Hawks put the former cover girl in this hugely entertaining Humphrey Bogart adventure (set in Vichy-controlled Martinique) on the advice of his wife. The original story was by Ernest Hemingway, but the film is pure Warners. A joy.

Television preview

Recommended viewing this weekend
by Gerard Gilbert



The Call of the Sea Sat 8.10pm BBC2
Have Your Cake and Eat It Sat 9.20pm BBC1
A Night In with the Girls Sat & Sun 9.20pm BBC2
My Night with Reg Sat 10.10pm BBC2
Family Money Sun 9pm C4
God Bless America Sun 11pm ITV

To call a cinema movie "stagey" is to denigrate it – the wrong-headed intrusion of one medium's artfulness into another medium – and with so much television drama now shot like a movie, a stagey TV drama is – QED – a bad thing. And yet, stagey material – i.e. setbound and borrowing theatrical conventions – is often what works best on television. Think of sitcoms: think of soap operas.

It helps, of course, when the material is as good as **My Night with Reg** (Sat BBC2), the latest in a so far exciting season of *Performance*. Kevin Elyot's moving and witty six-hander looks at the various machinations of a group of gay men, five of whom are either in love with (or have slept with) the eponymous but unseen Reg, who dies from Aids. I'd call it a gay *Big Chill* if that didn't sound so po-faced and anyway miss the point entirely. *My Night with Reg* is informed by the gay experience of Aids, but is not really about Aids, but about friendship, treachery and the often cruel logic of love. The original West End cast – David Bamber (currently camping it up in *Chalk*), John Sessions, Anthony Calf, Joe Duttine, Roger Frost and Kenneth MacDonald – are all intact and obviously very comfortable with the material. A treat.

Which is more than can be said of the join-the-dots adultery drama **Have Your Cake and Eat It** (Sat BBC1), whose opening episode has nothing remotely interesting to say on the subject. Griff Rhys-Jones lookalike Miles Anderson is the errant husband, Holly Aird his mistress and Sinead Cusack the wife. Both hubbie and his main squeeze work as designers of state-of-the-art amusement park attractions. So this four-parter (four parts!) has already secured a nomination for the most clunking metaphor of 1997 – an extra-marital affair as a roller-coaster ride.

Family Money (Sun C4) is also in four parts, but at least I can imagine watching the second instalment. Adapted by Ruth Carter from Nina Bawden's novel, this stars Claire Bloom as an ageing widow who is sitting on a small fortune in unrealised real estate – a period end-of-terrace family house in some extremely desirable part of London. When she receives a severe beating on the way back from her favourite restaurant, her children decide it's time she downsized and started divesting some of her wealth. On to them, naturally.

It's a good weekend for documentaries. **The Call of the Sea** (Sat BBC2) will add to BBC2's growing reputation as purveyors of quality oral history. The old salts on display here come straight from central casting, with their beards, jaunty caps and rheumy, faraway eyes. The first film looks at the conflicting desires amongst the sailors for the sea and for a stable home life.

A Night in with the Girls (Sat & Sun BBC2) is a history of women in television, starting in the 1940s when women were either decorative props in Light Entertainment or concerning themselves with the four Cs (cooking, children, clothes and celebrities). **God Bless America** (Sun ITV) is a second series of the programme in which writers weave personal portraits of individual US cities. Crime writer Patricia Cornwell applies her eye for life's darker ironies to Richmond, Virginia, whose principal landmark, for her, is the city morgue. "An autopsy is without doubt the most detailed medical examination you will ever have."

The big matches

Scotland v France
Sat 2pm BBC1 & 2.45pm BBC2
Wales v England
Sat 3pm BBC1

The Beeb are showing both matches in tandem – thanks to the hour's time difference with the Continent. The first half of France's attempt at the Grand Slam kicks off on BBC1 at 2pm, shifting, for its second half, to BBC2. The Cardiff Triple Crown decider sees probably the last Five Nations outing for one of rugby's modern legends, Will Carling *(above)*.

Saturday television and radio

BBC 1

7.00 Harry and the Hendersons *(R)(S)(T) (1415912).*
7.25 News, Weather *(3864979).*
7.30 Felix the Cat *(R)(S) (3553202).*
7.45 Phantom 2040 *(R)(S)(T) (8881196).*
8.10 The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest *(5673776).*
8.35 The Flintstones*(R) (5859399).*
9.00 Live and Kicking *(S) (78673283).*
12.12 Weather. *(7202134).*
12.15 Grandstand. Introduced by Steve Rider from Cardiff *(7201405).* 12.20 Football Focus *(2928641).* 1.00 News *(81540825).* 1.05 Rugby Union: the build-up to today's Five Nations Championship matches *(3793863).* 1.55 Rugby Union: France v Scotland. Live first-half coverage, kick-off at 2pm, from the Parc des Princes, Paris. The second half can be seen on BBC2 at 2.45pm. *See The big matches, above (7989009).* 2.45 Rugby Union: Wales v England. Live coverage from Cardiff Arms Park. Kick-off is at 3.00. *See the big matches, above (87228486).* 4.40 Final Score *(3268844).* 5.00 Rugby Union: France v Scotland. Second-half highlights *(6931).*
5.30 News, Weather *(T) (912863).*
5.40 Regional News and Weather *(101196).*
5.45 Dad's Army *(R)(S)(T) (892979).*
6.15 The New Adventures of Superman *(S) (476283).*
7.00 Noel's New York House Party. Noel Edmonds swaps Crinkley Bottom for a New York apartment, which gives him the opportunity to cosy up to the likes of David Hasselhoff, Tyne Daly, William Shatner and Barry Manilow. Joan Rivers, meanwhile, receives a Gotcha at a bogus art exhibition *(S) (239009).*
7.50 The National Lottery Live. Dale Winton announces Britain's Eurovision entry, while Whitney Houston shows off her latest single *(S)(T) (749825).*
8.10 Crime Traveller. Another mildly enjoyable yarn for Michael French and Chloë Annett's time-travelling coppers. This week, a fashion designer is receiving death threats *(S)(T) (309028).*
9.00 News and Sport, Weather *(T) (608825).*
9.20 Have Your Cake and Eat It. *See Preview, above (S) (338486).*
10.15 They Think It's All Over. Highlights of the second series of the comedy sports quiz *(S) (158047).*
10.45 Match of the Day. Nottingham Forest v Liverpool is the projected main event *(S)(T) (5805689).*
11.50 Chalk *(S) (T) (R) (538660).*
12.20 Top of the Pops *(R)(S)(T) (6902697).*
12.50 FILM The Bride in Black (James Goldstone 1990 US). Daytime soap star Susan Lucci plays a woman whose husband is shot outside the church on their wedding day. It turns out, natch, that her fiancé had a murky past. David Soul helps out in this join-the-dots thriller (T) *(5974968).*
2.20 Weather *(8186697). To 2.25am.*
REGIONS: Scot: 9.20pm Mind the Gap: The Old Course. 9.50 Have Your Cake and Eat It. 10.45 Sportscene – Match of the Day. 11.50 They Think It's All Over. 12.20 Chalk. 12.50 Top of the Pops.

BBC 2

6.20 Open University: Maarten Van Heemskerck: Humanism and Painting *(7120950).* 6.45 Drifting Continents *(9938009).* 7.10 Lifestyles, Work and the Family *(9764660).* 8.00 Open Saturday *(S) (421318).*
10.30 FILM Magic Town (William A Wellman 1947 US). Interesting Capra-esque fable (it was penned by Capra's regular scriptwriter, Robert Riskin) in which pollster James Stewart discovers a small town which exactly reflects national opinions and sets out to exploit it. Local newspaper editor Jane Wyman tries to thwart him (T) *(16053825).*
12.10 Film 97 with Barry Norman. Bazza looks at *The English Patient*, as we all will no doubt have to at some stage (R)(S)(T) *(2518134).*
12.40 FILM El Dorado (Howard Hawks 1967 US). Underrated to some, plain old tired late Hawksian western shenanigans to others – this stars John Wayne, broad of girth and sluggish of movement, as a cowboy who helps clean up drunken sheriff Robert Mitchum so that together they can beat off the baddies (T) *(38327432).*
2.45 International Rugby Union France v Scotland. Live second-half coverage from the Parc des Princes, Paris. Commentary by Bill McLaren and Gavin Hastings *(S) (4228680).*
3.30 The Car's the Star *(R) (5187912).*
3.50 The Saint. Peter "Jason King" Wyngarde guest-stars in this episode of the glam 1960s Simon Templar yarns. Roger Moore stars *(9798196).*
4.40 FILM To Have and Have Not (Howard Hawks 1944 US). *See The big picture, above* (T) *(280115).*
6.15 Travels With Pevsner. New architectural series which uses Nikolaus Pevsner's classic guide, *The Buildings of England*, as a starting point for six people to look at six English counties. First up, Dan Cruickshank on the buildings of Norfolk *(223028).*
7.05 News and Sport, Weather *(T) (872592).*
7.20 Correspondent. Andrew Jeffrey returns to Angola to come to terms with a horrific accident on an oil rig nearly two decades ago, which left him paralysed. Tim Whewell reports from Svelogorsk, in the former Soviet republic of Belarus, where the first Aids case was discovered six months ago and where now one person in 70 tests HIV positive *(S)(T) (338844).*
8.10 Call of the Sea. *See Preview, above (T) (684221).*
8.50 Till Death Us Do Part. An episode from 1974 finds Dandy Nichols's "silly moo" heading off to Australia to tend to her sick sister *(R) (312080).*
9.20 A Night In with the Girls. *See Preview, above (S)(T) (604931).*
10.10 Performance: My Night with Reg. *See Preview, above (S)(T) (309486).*
11.55 Windows on the World. Ian McGarry's film of the performance of young Irish composer Patrick Cassidy's cantata based on one of Ireland's best-loved legends, *The Children of Lir*. Recorded in 13th-century St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, with the Tallis Chamber Choir and the Irish Sinfonietta, conducted by Philip Simms *(S) (409554).*
12.50 Global VideoByte. Top of the pops in Taiwan, Mali, Germany, Sweden, Morocco and Egypt *(Then Weatherview) (3140784). To 1.15am.*

ITV/London

6.00 GMTV: 6.00 News. 6.10 Professor Bubble. 6.30 Bananas in Pyjamas. 6.50 Bug Alert! 7.15 Dragonflyz. 7.45 Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room. 8.55 Power Rangers Zeo *(6585202).*
9.25 Scratchy and Co *(S) (24060202).*
11.30 The Chart Show. *(S) (35298).*
12.30 Love Bites. Ant and Dec guest in the show dispensing advice on relationships *(96912).*
1.00 News, Weather. *(T) (81568221).*
1.05 London Weekend Today *(T) (81567592).*
1.10 UEFA Champions' League Special. Preview of the quarter-final second-leg matches being played this Wednesday *(88984806).*
1.40 Stuntmasters *(R) (11629009).*
2.05 FILM Greyfriars Bobby (Don Chaffey 1961 UK/US). The loyal little Skye terrier sets up home in the Greyfriars graveyard where his late master rests in this exceptionally fine live-action Disney offering. Stars Donald Crisp, Laurence Naismith, Kay Walsh and Gordon Jackson *(764592).*
3.45 SeaQuest DSV *(T) (297414).*
4.45 News, Sports Results, Weather. *(T) (3252283).*
5.05 London Weekend Tonight *(T) (1425405).*
5.20 Clueless *(S)(T) (6719383).*
5.45 Sabrina, the Teenage Witch. *Superman* actor Dean Cain guest-stars as himself *(S) (469196).*
6.10 Early Edition. This new US import stars Kyle Chandler as a stockbroker who is mysteriously sent a newspaper containing the next day's news. Does he use it for personal profit or to help humanity? *(T) (961776).*
7.05 You Bet! *(S)(T) (969738).*
8.05 Stars in Their Eyes. New series of this popular impersonation and karaoke show – and a Jarvis Cocker and an Ethel Merman (oh, yes) are among the first up *(S)(T) (306931).*
8.50 News, Weather, Lottery Result *(T) (857738).*
9.05 Cracker the Movie: True Romance. Fancy packaging for what is really two repeated episodes showing back to back. Fitz starts getting anonymous love letters from a woman who thinks he is perfect. But when a dead body turns up, Fitz gets another letter which suggests that his admirer is the killer *(R)(S)(T) (25360738).*
11.05 Tarrant on TV. Chris Tarrant looks at the way condoms, once taboo, are now treated openly on TV. Tired stuff – but then, this is a repeat *(R)(T) (259486).*
12.05 In Bed with Medinner. Bob Mills takes a another trawl through odd and obscure TV *(S) (6098448).*
12.30 FILM Tom Horn (William Wiard 1980 US). Steve McQueen knew he had terminal cancer when he made this beautifully photographed western. It centres on a former cavalry scout whose uncompromising methods rub people up the wrong way when he turns them from tracking Indians to confronting cattle rustlers *(347784).*
2.25 Tropical Heat *(S) (9582887).*
3.20 E! News Review *(7702158).*
4.00 Club Nation *(R)(S) (8970245).*
4.55 Night Shift *(R)(S) (34698413).*
5.05 Coach *(S) (1959239).*
5.25 Night Shift *(R)(S) (8689500).*
5.30 News *(99581). To 6.00am.*

Channel 4

6.00 Sesame Street *(R) (29912).*
7.00 Dumb and Dumber *(35486).*
7.30 Dennis *(R) (3546912).*
7.45 First Edition *(R) (3541467).*
8.00 Transworld Sport *(91202).*
9.00 Morning Line *(S) (68399).*
10.00 Gazzetta Football Italia *(43405).*
11.00 NBA 24/7. Mark Webster meets Shaquille O'Neal, one of the NBA's all-time great players, in his LA apartment *(S) (23641).*
12.00 Lambs' Tales. Film-maker Amanda Baxter visits a farm in the Cumbrian mountains during the lambing season (R)(S)(T) *(8861573).*
12.40 Channel 4 Racing. From Uttoxeter. Derek Thompson introduces the 12.45, 1.15, 1.50 and 2.25 races *(S) (40022860).*
2.45 FILM Humoresque (Jean Negulesco 1946 US). Joan Crawford, in the second, post-*Mildred Pierce*, stage of her movie career, plays the patroness of rising violinist John Garfield (dubbed by Isaac Stern). A stonking Warner melodrama with (Clifford Odets) dialogue so unintentionally camp that it ought to join the scouts *(T) (16539860).*
5.05 Brookside Omnibus *(R)(S)(T) (2882912).*
6.30 Right to Reply *(S)(T) (573).*
7.00 A Week in Politics *(S) (4660).*
8.00 The Goldring Audit. Stern-eyed Mary Goldring investigates flat racing, an industry in which prize money is insufficient to give owners a reasonable return. The demands of the betting industry keep ill-frequented racecourses open, there are new bloodstock technologies that nobody wants, and there is no considered plan for the future. That's telling them *(S)(T) (4680).*
9.00 Last Chance Lottery. Ulster stand-up Patrick Kielty and more of life's losers *(S) (4824).*
10.00 Eurotrash. Antoine et Jean-Paul front this rerun magazine show looking at those odd people who live just across the English Channel. Tonight's programme travels to Amsterdam for the annual Cannabis Cup, and meets aspiring porn directors in France. Plus Michael Winner's verdict on Europe's first drag-queen restaurant *(R)(S) (91979).*
10.30 The Show. More from Bob Mills and his let-it-all-hang-out chat show *(S) (8967879).*
11.35 Hill Street Blues. Two desperate young Puerto Ricans take hostages during a hold-up *(R)(T) (154592).*
12.35 The Client. Ho-hum drama series based on John Grisham's best-selling thriller. Momma Love's friend Verna asks Reggie to protect her from a family member who wants to destroy her marriage for personal financial reward *(S) (5850055).*
1.30 The Girlie Show. Guests include the Spice Girls – wee, hah. Don't they ever rest? *(S) (9900264).*
2.05 Ricki Lake *(R)(S)(T) (8088326).*
2.50 Beavis and Butt-Head *(R)(S) (5172516).*
3.15 Flava *(S) (99177).*
3.45 Bless This House *(R)(S) (98448).*
4.15 Film Night. Janice Forsyth looks at Milos Forman's new film, *The People vs Larry Flynt* (R)(S) *(54516).*
4.45 The Beat Specials. The Red Hot Chili Peppers in concert *(R) (9668054). To 5.50am.*

ITV/Regions

ANGLIA
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(96912).* 1.05 Anglia News *(81567592).* 1.40 A World of Wonder *(2249009).* 2.15 Baywatch *(8784776).* 3.10 Film: Carry On Sergeant* *(77688573).* 5.05 Anglia News, Sport *(1425405).* 12.05 Film: Into Thin Air *(535852).* 1.50 Carnal Knowledge *(3475500).* 2.45 Film: Goliath and the Barbarians *(115210).* 4.15 Sound Bites *(19394790).* 4.35-5.30am Funky Bunker *(6543448).*

CENTRAL
As London except: 12.30pm Premiere *(96912).* 1.05 Central News *(81567592).* 1.40 Movies, Games and Videos *(11635660).* 2.10 Film: Son of Flubber* *(761405).* 3.50 seaQuest DSV *(8517863).* 5.05 Central News *(9610115).* 5.10 Central Match – Goals Extra *(3484202).* 4.00 Jobfinder *(1122500).* 5.20-5.30am Asian Eye *(8194887).*

HTV WALES
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(96912).* 1.05 HTV Wales News *(81567592).* 1.40 Stuntmasters *(7984554).* 2.30 World of Wonder *(3981844).* 2.55 Airwolf *(3862283).* 3.50 Baywatch *(8517863).* 5.05 HTV Wales News and Sports Results *(1425405).* 12.05 Film: Into Thin Air *(535852).* 1.50 Carnal Knowledge *(3475500).* 2.45 Film: Goliath and the Barbarians *(115210).* 4.15 Sound Bites *(19394790).* 4.35-5.30am Funky Bunker *(6543448).*

HTV West
As HTV Wales except: 1.05pm HTV West Headlines *(81567592).* 1.10 Sportsweek *(1931370).* 1.45 UEFA Champions League Special *(607738).* 2.15 Cartoon Time *(27283134).* 2.20 Airwolf *(2182467).* 3.15 Baywatch *(4857950).* 4.10 The List *(4906931).* 5.05-5.20pm HTV West News, Sports Results *(1425405).*

MERIDIAN
As London except: 12.30pm Pier Pressure *(96912).* 1.05 Meridian News *(81567592).* 1.40 Movies, Games and Videos *(2249009).* 2.15 Baywatch *(8784776).* 3.10 Film: Carry On Sergeant* *(77688573).* 5.05 Meridian News *(1425405).* 12.05 Film: Into Thin Air *(535852).* 1.50 Carnal Knowledge *(3475500).* 2.45 Film: Goliath and the Barbarians *(115210).* 4.15 Sound Bites *(19394790).* 4.35-5.30am Funky Bunker *(6543448).*

WESTCOUNTRY
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(96912).* 1.05 Westcountry News *(81567592).* 1.40 Planet Rock Profiles *(11635660).* 2.10 Stuntmasters *(8262757).* 2.50 Airwolf *(8364047).* 3.50 seaQuest DSV *(8517863).* 5.05 Westcountry News *(1425405).* 12.05 Film: Into Thin Air *(535852).* 1.50 Carnal Knowledge *(3475500).* 2.45 Film: Goliath and the Barbarians *(115210).* 4.15 Sound Bites *(19394790).* 4.35-5.30am Funky Bunker *(6543448).*

YORKSHIRE
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(96912).* 1.05 Calendar News *(81567592).* 1.40 Film: The Undefeated *(35918776).* 3.50 Baywatch *(8517863).* 5.05 Calendar News *(9610115).* 5.10 Scoreline *(3484202).* 12.05 Movie Show Special *(6098448).* 12.30 Coach *(3220974).* 12.55 In Bed with Medinner *(5695245).* 1.25 Film: McCabe and Mrs Miller *(27431871).* 3.35 Funny Business *(13023603).* 4.05 Collins and Maconie's Movie Club *(41849974).* 4.30 Murder, She Wrote *(7702852).* 5.20-5.30am Sound Bites *(8194887).*

Channel 3 North East
As Yorkshire except: 1.05pm North East News *(81567592).* 5.05 North East News *(9610115).* 5.10-5.20am Full Time *(3484202).*

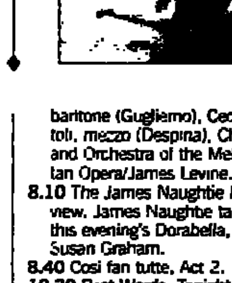
S4C
As C4 except: 10.00am Hangin' with Mr Cooper *(88080).* 10.30 Birdies on the Green *(69370).* 12.00 Moviewatch *(83950).* 12.30 Channel 4 Racing *(51592).* 2.30 Rygbi: Pencampwriaeth Y Pum Gwlad *(14256592).* 6.30 Traveleg *(573).* 7.00 News *(875689).* 7.15 Noson I'w Chofio: Egwyl Gadeiriol Lerpwl *(2678592).* 8.20 Hel Straeon *(433912).* 8.50 Pengelli *(823793).* 9.25 Last Chance Lottery *(4838134).* 11.35 Fortean TV *(532486).* 12.05 Bright Sparks *(6904055).* 4.45-5.40am The Beat Specials *(7892429).*

Radio

Radio 1
(97.6-99.8MHz FM)
6.00am Dave Pearce **9.30** Mark Goodier **12.30** Claire Sturgess **3.30** Trevor Nelson **6.30** Danny Rampling – Lovegroove Dance Party **9.00** Radio 1 Rap Show **12.00** The Radio 1 Reggae Dancehall Nite **2.00** Essential Mix – DJ Sneak **4.00-6.00am** Annie Nightingale

Radio 2
(88-90.2MHz FM)
6.00am Mo Dutta **8.05** Brian Matthew **10.00** Steve Wright **1.00** The Monkhouse Archive **1.30** To the Manor Born **2.00** Judi Spiers **4.00** Nick Barraclough **5.00** Ry Cooder: Chicken Skin Music **6.00** Comic Relief on 2 **7.00** Schmooze and Showbiz (R) **7.30** The Music of Robert Stolz **9.30** David Jacobs **10.00** The Showband Years **12.05** Sue McGarry **4.00-7.00am** Mo Dutta

Radio 3
(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.55am Weather, News Headlines.
7.00 Record Review.
9.00 Building a Library.
10.15 Record Release.
11.15 Reissues.
12.00 Private Passions. Another chance to hear Michael Berkeley talking to broadcaster and anthropologist David Attenborough. (R)
1.00 I Was There. Richard Fawkes returns with five more interviews that bring to life great musical events and celebrities of the past. In the first programme, cellist Alexander Kok recalls his time as the youngest member of the Philharmonia.
1.20 News; Vintage Years. In the first of three programmes, Annette Morreau investigates the short life of William Kapell, the first virtuoso pianist to be born and trained in America. (R)
3.20 Youth Orchestras of the World. The Royal Academy of Music presents a programme of 16th- and 17th-century antiphonal music associated with St Mark's, Venice.
5.00 Jazz Record Requests.
5.45 Music Matters.
6.30 Live from the Met: Così fan tutte. Mozart's black comedy with an untranslatable title is an intimate six-hander of partner-swapping and deception in love. Carol Vaness, soprano (Fiordiligi), Susan Graham, mezzo (Dorabella), Stanford Olsen, tenor (Fernando), Mark Oswald, baritone (Guglielmo), Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo (Despina), Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/James Levine. Act 1.
8.10 The James Naughtie Interview. James Naughtie talks to this evening's Dorabella, mezzo Susan Graham.
8.40 Così fan tutte, Act 2.
10.20 Best Words. Tonight, an interview with poet and translator Elaine Feinstein, and Helen Dunmore reassesses DH Lawrence's love poetry.
10.50 Impressions. Alyn Shipton talks to New Yorker David Shea about his compositions, which combine sampling and improvisation. For a specially recorded session, Shea is joined by Scanner (Robin Rimbaud) and by tuba player Oren Marshall.
12.30 First Bass. Bass player Ray Brown talks to Alyn Shipton. (R)
1.00-7.00am Through the Night.



Choice

Ian McEwan attempts to delineate his ideal state – where flux is permanent and, perhaps unsurprisingly, all are free to be miserable, in **Utopia and Other Destinations** (6.50pm R4). Earlier in the day, **The News Quiz** (12.25pm R4) returns to laugh off the miseries of real life.

Radio 4
(92.4-94.6MHz FM; 198kHz LW)
6.00am News Briefing.
6.10 Farming Today.
6.50 Prayer for the Day.
6.55 Weather.
7.00 Today.
8.58 Weather.
9.00 News.
9.05 Sport on 4.
9.30 Breakaway.
10.00 News; Loose Ends.
11.00 News; The Week in Westminster.
11.30 The Americas File. Bridget Kendall reports from Argentina.
12.00 Money Box.
12.25 The News Quiz. *See choice, above*
12.55 Weather.
1.00 News.
1.10 Any Questions? Jonathan Dimbleby and the panel are in Bonnyrigg, Midlothian. With Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland; Alistair Darling, shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury; Sir David Steel MP; and Dr Winnie Ewing, president of the SNP.
1.55 Shipping Forecast.
2.00 News; Any Answers?
2.30 Saturday Playhouse: Death and the Pleasant Voices. By William Ingram, from the novel by Mary Fitt. When Jake gets stranded in a thunderstorm, he doesn't expect the welcome he gets when he asks for shelter. With Matthew Morgan, Andrew Wincott and Julie Higginson. (R)
4.00 News: That's History.
4.30 Science Now. A look at why male fertility rates are dropping.
5.00 Anthony Clare's Musical Melancholia. Professor Anthony Clare asks why gloomy music is so popular. (R)
5.40 New York Diaries. American humorist David Sedaris reads from his diaries.
5.50 Shipping Forecast.
5.55 Weather.
6.00 Six O'Clock News.
6.25 Week Ending.
6.50 Utopia and Other Destinations. An interview with writer Ian McEwan. *See choice, above*
7.20 Kaleidoscope Feature. One of the most enduring plainsong antiphons which has inspired composers from medieval times to the present day is Salve Regina, traditionally sung by monks at compline every night. Richard Coles examines its history, how it reflects changing attitudes to the Virgin Mary over the centuries, and discovers the legend which was said to have inspired the original composition.
7.50 On These Days.
8.50 Saturday Night Theatre: The Colour Norman. By Stephen Dinsdale and Jerome Vincent. Science student Norman Gittings invents a new colour and is besieged by fashion designers, greedy lawyers and MI5, all desperate to get their hands on it. With Richard Pearce, Roger May and David March. (R)
9.35 Classics with Kay.
9.50 Ten to Ten.
9.59 Weather.
10.00 News.
10.15 Dark Tales: The Beetle. By Richard Marsh. Dramatised by Roger Danes. First published in the same year as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which Marsh's Gothic novel outsold six times over. Member of Parliament Paul Lessingham, a handsome man of wealth, talent and ambition, has a strange and disturbing past which threatens to destroy him. With Robert Harper.
11.45 Britain in Pictures. (R)
12.00 News.
12.30 The Late Story: A Good You-Know-What. By Michael Carson.
12.48 Shipping Forecast.
1.00 As World Service.
5.50 Inshore Forecast.
5.51 Bells on Sunday.
5.55-6.00am Shipping Forecast.

Radio 4 LW
(92.4-94.6MHz FM; 198kHz LW)
No Variations

Radio 5
(693, 909kHz MW)
6.00am Dirty Tackle **6.30** Brian Hayes at Breakfast **9.00** Weekend **11.00** Top Gear **11.30** Sick as a Parrot **12.00** Richard Littlejohn **1.00** Sport on Five **6.06** Six-O-Six **8.00** News and Sport **8.10** The Treatment **9.00** Dallyn UK **10.00** Brief Lives **10.30** Asian Perspective **11.00** News Extra **12.00** After Hours **2.00** Up All Night **5.00-6.00am** Morning Reports

Classic FM
(100-101.9MHz FM)
6.00am Sarah Lucas **9.00** Countdown **12.00** Gardening Forum **1.00** Alan Mann **4.00** Jane Markham **7.00** Travel Guide **8.00** Evening Concert **10.00** The Classic Quiz **12.00** Andre Leon **4.00** Travel Guide **5.00-6.00am** Michael Fanstone

Virgin Radio
(1215, 1197-1260kHz MW 105.8MHz FM)
6.00am Janey Lee Grace **8.00** Russ 'n' Jono's Greatest Hits **10.00** Jeremy Clark **2.00** The Album Chart with Mark Forrest **6.00** Lynn Parsons **10.00** Robin Banks **2.00-6.00am** Howard Pearce

World Service
(198kHz LW)
1.00am Newsdesk **1.30** Just a Minute **2.00** Newsday **2.30** People and Politics **3.00** World News **3.15** Sports Roundup **3.30** Music Review **4.00** Newsdesk **4.30** Short Story **4.45** On the Move **5.00** Newsday **5.30-6.00am** Weekend/In Praise of God (SW 7150kHz only)

Satellite

SKY 1
7.00am Orson and Olivia *(80950).* **7.30** Free Willy *(76757).* **8.00** The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles *(20738).* **9.00** Quantum Leap *(41893).* **10.00** Kung Fu – The Legend Continues *(65641).* **11.00** Legends of the Hidden City *(65592).* **11.30** Sea Rescue *(66221).* **12.00** Wrestling *(51863).* **1.00** Wrestling *(37283).* **2.00** Star Trek *(41573).* **3.00** Star Trek: The Next Generation *(44009).* **4.00** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine *(56844).* **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager *(4252).* **6.00** Kung Fu – The Legend Continues *(57047).* **7.00** Hercules: The Legendary Journeys *(90776).* **8.00** Coppers *(7689).* **8.30** Cops I *(6196).* **9.00** Cops II *(52028).* **9.30** The Serial Killers *(52592).* **10.00** Law and Order *(99047).* **11.00** Red Shoe Diaries *(57573).* **11.30** The Movie Show *(46028).* **12.00** Wild Oats *(41968).* **12.30** LAPD *(61149).* **1.00** Dream On *(64535).* **1.30** Smouldering Lust *(26564).* **2.00-6.00am** Hit Mix Long Play *(1211993).*

SKY 2
7.00pm Beverly Hills, 90210 *(6898825).* **8.00** Melrose Place *(6807573).* **9.00** Pacific Drive *(6894009).* **10.00** Tales from the Crypt *(7403844).* **10.30** Tales from the Crypt *(7412592).* **11.00** Stand and Deliver *(2975863).* **11.30** Stand and Deliver *(7454399).* **12.00-6.00am** Hit Mix *(9228239).*

MOVIE CHANNEL
6.05 The Walls of Jericho* *(72420776).* **8.00** Farewell to the King *(30467).* **10.00** The St Tammany Miracle *(41486).* **12.00** Bandit's Silver Angel *(53318).* **2.00** Free Willy 2: The Adventure Home *(71641).* **4.00** The Amazing Panda Adventure *(3486).* **6.00** Johnny's Girl *(91405).* **8.00** Free Willy 2: The Adventure Home *(96950).* **10.00** Parallel Lives *(787115).* **11.45** Pentathlon *(807863).* **1.30** Diamond Skulls *(22326).* **3.00** The Most Desired Man *(941326).* **4.35-6.10am** The St Tammany Miracle *(33048332).*

SKY MOVIES
6.20am The Borrowers *(64476641).* **8.00** Police Academy: Mission to Moscow *(32825).* **10.00** Roswell *(43844).* **12.00** The Neverending Story 3 *(55776).* **2.00** I Love Trouble *(80399).* **4.00** Police Academy: Mission to Moscow *(5844).* **6.00** Roswell *(93863).* **8.00** I Love Trouble *(65080).* **10.00** The Shooter *(770825).* **11.50** Inner Sanctum *(314739).* **1.25** Fatherland *(231790).* **3.15-6.00am** Cowboy Way *(99500608).*

SKY MOVIES GOLD
6.00pm Dunkirk* *(88348283).* **8.15** Beetlejuice *(17542404).* **10.00** A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2: Freddy's Revenge *(7807689).* **11.30** Death Hunt *(3773950).* **1.10** Spymaker: The Secret Life of Ian Fleming *(5731332).* **2.50** Pat and Mike* *(8723603).* **4.25-5.50am** Murder at the Gallop* *(68985167).*

SKY SPORTS 1
7.00am World Sports *(80216).* **7.30** The Rugby Club *(54115).* **8.30** Racing *(15196).* **9.00** Super League *(57318).* **10.30** Ringside *(34776).* **12.00** Sports Saturday *(65689).* **1.00** Badminton *(62046009).* **3.45** Sports Saturday Results *(997028).* **5.30** NHL Powerweek *(52973).* **6.30** Ice Hockey: Superleague Play-off *(954196).* **9.00** Rugby Union *(788080).* **11.30** Spanish Football *(709573).* **2.00-4.30am** Ice Hockey: Superleague Play-Off *(319852).*

SKY SPORTS 2
7.00am Soccer AM *(8766486).* **11.00** Survival of the Fittest *(8173370).* **11.30** World Sports Special *(8181399).* **12.00** Golf: Portuguese Open *(7008405).* **2.00** Golf: Portuguese Open *(5308467).* **5.00** Badminton *(4100825).* **7.00** Spanish Football *(2105486).* **9.30** Motor Sport *(9737318).* **11.00-1.00am** Golf: Portuguese Open *(3187979).*

SKY SPORTS 3
12.00noon Cricket – South Africa v Australia: Second Test *(68400757).* **3.30** Cricket – West Indies v India: Second Test *(93297912).* **9.00** Golf: Honda Classic *(92998283).* **11.00** Inside the PGA Senior Tour *(32193554).* **11.30-12.00midnight** The Snowboard Show *(30811979).*

LIVE TV
6.00am Pin Money **6.30** Fashion **7.00** Sport **7.30** Sport Quiz **8.00** Pop Quiz **8.30** Looking for Love **8.45** Pet Squad **9.00** Revelations **9.30** Fashion **10.00** Agony **10.30** Bingo **10.45** Pet Squad **11.00** Trial TV **11.30** Fate and Fortune **12.00** Why **12.30** Agony **1.30** Trial TV **2.00** Fashion **2.30** Agony **3.00** Fate and Fortune **3.30** Pin Money **4.00** Looking for Love **4.30** Pop Quiz **5.00** Agony **5.30** Eva's Seventies Pop Show **6.00** Fashion **6.30** Sport **7.00** Pin Money **7.30** Sport Quiz **8.00** Bushido **9.00** Handy Hunks; Bingo **9.15** Bottom Line **9.30** Why **10.00** Topless Darts; Sport **10.30** Stand-Up **11.00** Topless Darts; Fate and Fortune **11.30** Sex **11.55** Erotica Exotica **12.30** Kiss TV **1.30** Shopping **2.00** Sex **2.30** Stand-Up **3.00** Revelations **3.30** Why Flies? **4.00** Sex **4.30** Pin Money **5.00** Sport **5.30-6.00am** Shopping

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